

THE
T R U T H
OF THE
Christian Religion.



THE
TRUTH

OF THE *Simiana* (C.E. F. G. G.)
Christian Religion.

Written Originally in *Italian*, for the
Benefit of the Court of Savoy,
By the Marquess of *Pianezza*.

To which is prefix'd,
An Account of the AUTHOR, of his
Treatise, and the Translation of it.
With Occasional Remarks upon some Parti-
culars in the Original.

By *Tho. Wise*, M. A.
Fellow of *Exeter-College* in *Oxford*.

Εγὼ μὲν ὁμολογῶ εἶναι Χριστιανὸς καὶ φοβῶ τὸ θεοφιλὲς ὄνο-
μα τούτο, ἐλπίζων εὐχρηστὸς εἶναι τῷ θεῷ. Theophil. ad
Antolyc. Lib. 1.

Fructum Bono nostro; & recti sententiam temperemus; co-
hibeatur Superstitio, Impietas expietur, vera Religio re-
servetur. M. Minuc. Felix in Octav. pag. 73. Ed. Cantab.

L O N D O N,

Printed for Dan. Brown at the Black Swan and Bible without
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Church-yard. MDCCIII.

a 3618.

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THE
T R U E H

OF THE
Christian Religion

Which Originally is Latin, but the
Basis of the Court of Rome
By the Manuscripts of Pious



By John Wile, M. A.

Fellow of the Royal College in Oxford

Printed by W. Woodcock, at the Press of the Royal College in Oxford

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L O N D O N

Printed by W. Woodcock, at the Press of the Royal College in Oxford

To the Right Reverend Father in God,

JONATHAN,

Lord Bishop of *Exon*;

A Person no less Eminent by *Virtue*
than *Birth*,

As truly deserving those more than
Honourable *Pitts*,

Of a Good Man, an Orthodox Chri-
stian, a Vigilant Diocesan, an Ex-
perienced Lover and Upholder of
the Church and Laws of *England*;

And, what I am particularly oblig'd to mention,

A Zealous Visitor and Strenuous De-
fender of *Exeter College*:

THIS TREATISE OF

The Noble and Vertuous Marquess of

RIANEZZA,

Together with the Discourse prefix'd to it,

Is humbly Dedicated by

HIS LORDSHIP'S

Most Faithful and

Most Obedient Servant,

Tho. Wise.

To his Ingenious Friend, Mr. Wise,
upon his Publication of the follow-
ing Discourses.

HOW lively do's thy *English* Tongue
express
The gravest Reas'nings in a Courtly Dress;
And with surprizing Lustre, in each Line
The nice *Italian* Genius refine!
Cæsar himself must lay his Lawrels down,
And yield to *Pianezza's* great Renown;
Who, to the Lustre of his Arts and Arms,
Added the brighter Fame of Vertue's Charms:
Heaven sure upon a Miracle was bent,
To make both General and Statesman, Saint!

J. O. D. D.

ERRATA.

P. 6. l. 17. r. *subtle*. P. 9. at bottom, r. *semperque*.
P. 12. at bottom, for Q. 1. r. L. 1. P. 22. l. 11. for *then*
r. *the*. P. 184. l. ult. add *it*.

A Preliminary
General of the Cavalry of Savoy, and
amous as well for his Policy and Goodness,
he was for his Valour and Conduct.
as he found there was occasion for it.
to the Interests of Charles Emmanuel I. Duke
of Savoy; which he has readily re-
turned his Favours, and omitted nothing
DISCOURSE.

CONTAINING
An ACCOUNT of the
AUTHOR, &c.

Our Author, the Marquis of Pianezza, was the only Issue of this Marriage and had
CHARLES Emanuel Filibert Hyacinth, Marquis of Pianezza, Castello Nuovo, &c. descended from the an-
cient House of Simiana, which for-
merly had the Sovereignty of the City of
Apt in Provence, and of all the adjacent
Country; and which, besides its relation to
many other Sovereign Houses, to the Counts
of Forcalquier, the Viscounts of Marseilles, &c.
was also the Stock of the Family of Aosta,
from which are derived the Counts of Saulx.
Many of its Branches have signalized them-
selves by their noble Atchievements, particu-
larly Bertrand of Simiana, Lord of Gordes
and Governor of Dauphiny, under Henry III.
of France; and Charles of Simiana, second Son
to the former, Lord of Abigny, Bully, &c.
General

General of the Cavalry of *Savoy*, and famous as well for his Piety and Goodness, as he was for his Valour and Conduct. He, as he found there was occasion, firmly stuck to the Interests of *Charles Emanuel I.* Duke of *Savoy*; which Prince also as heartily return'd his Favours, and omitted nothing which might still engage him in his Service, and retain him in his Dominions. For which end, first he made him Knight of his Orders; next he made him General of his Forces, and Governor of *Savoy*; and after that married him to his Sister *Matilda*, the Daughter of *Emanuel Filibert*.

Our Author, the Marquess of *Pianezza*, was the only Issue of this Marriage, and had not been long in the World, before his Father left it; and so, in his Minority, he fell under the Care of his Mother, who being a Miracle of Prudence and Vertue, was highly concerned about his Education, and retir'd from the Court, that she might the more commodiously apply her self to it. The young Marquess was blessed with an excellent Temper, with a sprightly Wit, and noble Inclination; which very rich Fund was accordingly cultivated by the best Masters, so that he was compleatly form'd to Piety and Learning, and to whatever suited with his Quality and Birth.

So soon as he was able to handle a Sword, he was mightily taken with Arms and Glory; inso-

infomuch that he missed not one of those frequent occasions, which were then offered in the Wars of *Genoua* and *Montferrat*; and having given continual Marks of his Courage and Prudence, he quickly obtained the Repute of a brave Soldier, and a wise Commander. *Piedmont* being settled by the Peace of *Querasque*, *Victor Amedeus*, who had been often an Eye-witness of the Marquess of *Pianezza*'s Conduct, was very unwilling to let him lie idle; wherefore he put him upon publick Business, and not regarding the Tenderneſs of his Age, intrusted him at the first with a very important and a difficult Negotiation: for he sent him Ambassador extraordinary into *Germany*, that together with the usual Investitures, he might also obtain that of a part of *Montferrat*, which the Treaty of *Querasque* had lately assigned to him.

The Court of *Vienna* was surprized to see an Ambassador of but twenty five Years of Age, yet withal as prudent and judicious as the most experienced Ministers: accordingly the Court of *Savoy* had good Success in this momentous Embassy.

This first political Essay made the Duke of *Savoy* take more notice of the Marquess of *Pianezza*, and lay hold on him as a fit Person for his Privy-Council; notwithstanding which, he still serv'd in the Wars which then broke out: He animated by his Presence

the Duke's Troops, which joined with the *French* against the *Milanese*; defeated by his Counsels the Designs of the *Spaniards*, and gave such Instances of Courage in the most difficult Junctures, that by his Merit he became Colonel General of the Infantry of *Savoy*.

The dangerous Wounds he frequently received did not discourage, but rather seem'd to encourage him; wherever the Heat was greatest, there was he still sure to be, and that with such a Constancy, Coolness and Evenness of Temper, that he surprized the most Courageous, and emboldened the most Cowardly.

Thus did the Marquess of *Pianezza* acquit himself in three, nay I may say in four successive Regencys, if that of *Francis Hyacinth*, who died the same Year with his Father, may be reckoned a distinct Regency. To omit many other notable Instances under the aforementioned Prince, it was too well known to the Marquess of *Leganez*, and *Don Francisco de Muellos*, how bravely he behaved himself during a sharp Engagement of above twelve Hours at *Tornavento*, and presently after that at the taking of *Gatinata*, &c.

After the Decease of *Victor Amedeus*, and soon after that of *Francis Hyacinth*, the Regency being deputed to the Royal Dowager, during the Minority of her younger Son,
Charles

concerning the Author, &c.

Charles Emanuel II, still the Marquess of *Pianezza* continu'd to signalize himself by many notable Actions, which mightily conduced to render *France* victorious beyond the Mountains. With his Pike in his Hand, he made his way thro the Rout of the Soldiery, forc'd and freed the Lines of *Casal*; and bore up before *Turin* against the Efforts of a potent Army, with only a handful of Men. Thus also at the Battel of *Cengio*, fought with *Don Martin* of *Aragon*, after a hot Dispute of eight hours, he with his Co-adjutants, the Cardinal *de la Valette*, and the Marquess of *Ville*, obtain'd the Conquest: Thus again was he successful in the retaking of *Chivas*, *Fossano* and *Bexe*; in relieving *Casal*, and routing the Spanish Army; in the taking of *Ceva*, *Montdovi*, the Castle of *Carru*, of *Coni*, *Rivoli*, &c. In these and many other Instances has he been admir'd even by those, who were themselves the Wonders of *Europe*.

But now the Royal Dowager, as very well knowing that great Ministers are *Tutelar Gods* of Empires, and that his Life cannot be too carefully preserved, on whom the Safety of a *People* depends, thought fit to call home the Marquess of *Pianezza*, that so he might be nearer to her Person; and having made him President of her Council, she would no longer suffer him to expose himself to such Dangers as he had

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done,

done, nor to desert the Court upon any other occasion.

Then most especially it was, that he took upon him the Conduct of Affairs, and therein display'd a prodigious Capacity and Greatness of Parts, providing for all that related to the Government, without ever making false Steps, and taking Advantages as well by bad as good Success; holding the Subjects within the Bounds of Duty, maintaining Friendship with the Allies, disjoining and confounding the Intrigues of Enemies, and prudently managing those Powers, which he could neither oppose nor win.

The Embassadors and Agents of Foreign Crowns have often own'd that they never saw a Man more subtel, and more insinuating, more piercing, and yet more impetrable, than the Minister of *Savoy*; and it was acknowledged on all hands, that besides a great Fund of Light and Wisdom as to other matters, a lofty Genius, and a Natural Eloquence, together with a genteel and an agreeable Deportment, he particularly comprehended the whole Design of Politicks, exactly understood all the Intrigues of Courts, and the various Interests of Princes.

Moreover, tho at this time the Cabinet, one would think, took up all his Thoughts and Cares, yet did he never omit to make use of whatever occasions were offered, for
any

any noble Enterprize; to mount his Horse, to gain unexpected Victories, without Army, without Equipage, and without any other Assistance than only a few Men pick'd up in Garisons.

Thus did he surprise and take *Verrua*, a considerable Place, and famous for the Sieges it sustain'd in the Wars of *Italy*; he himself in Person led the Miners into the Trench, pointed out to 'em the Place where they were to fix, and never left 'em till they had made their way.

By his Counsels he gave Success to many other Expeditions, where albeit he appear'd not in Person, while, in Quality of a chief Minister, he was the first Mover and Director in the Court of *Savoy*: And the *French* Generals in their Passage by *Turin*, never failed to consult him, both as a brave Soldier, and also a wise Politician.

About the Year 1648. he gave a great Mark of his Discretion and Loyalty, by re-instating the Dutche's Regent and the young Duke in the City of *Jurea*, not far from *Turin*; at which time this latter being about the Age of thirteen, had the Government delivered up to him by his Mother. Still the Courage and Counsel of the Mar-ques were implor'd, and found successful in the most important Junctures; in quelling Seditions by Prudence, and in managing Wars by Force, particularly in the taking of *Trino* and *Mortaro*.

But neither was the Marquess of *Pi-
nezza's* Knowledg limited to Politicks and
Warfare only; he was also well-skill'd in Arts
and Sciences, having applied himself to 'em
from his Childhood. Besides *Humanities*,
and the Politer parts of Learning, he was
also a perfect Master of the old and new
Philosophy; he exactly understood the *Ma-
thematicks*, and knew all the Secrets of *Op-
ticks* and *Light*; he was very well vers'd
in the Business of *Anatomy*, and was fre-
quently present at the Dissections of Ani-
mals, that he might particularly observe the
Circulation of the Blood, and the Passage of
the *Chyle* into the Heart.

Histories both Sacred and Profane were
even as distinct in his Memory, as in Books.
He had a mighty Genius for Languages,
and understood most of the *European* very
near as well as his own, particularly he could
write in *Spanish* and *French*, almost as rea-
dily and politely as in *Italian*.

Moreover, which may seem to be incredi-
ble, he had in his Head the Body of *Divi-
nity*, and thoroughly understood the main
Grounds of Religion, even as if he had spent
his whole Life in reading the Holy Scrip-
tures, the ancient Fathers and the late
Divines. But notwithstanding this, to make
the Wonder yet greater, and to shew his
Accomplishments this way more remarka-
ble, there was no curious Book, of what
kind

kind soever, printed either in *Italy, Spain or France*, but he read it and gave an account of it, either to the Author himself, to the Person that sent it him, or else to such Friends as desired to know his Opinion of it. Nothing can be more judicious and exact, than the Answers he wrote about things of this nature to many learned Men, who held a particular Correspondence with him.

Velleius Paterculus has said of *Scipio Africanus*, that no Man ever made a better use of his Leisure, that all the time, in which he was free from Business, he spent in Study, divided himself between the Arts of Peace and War, and either exercised his Body by Labour, or improv'd his Mind by Learning*. Much the same may be said of the Marquess of *Pianezza*, or rather it may be said, that he study'd all his Life, amidst the Tumult of Arms and the Hurry of Business; that he found out the Secret of becoming profoundly learned, even while he presided over Armies, and governed States. With what a vast, what an universal Capacity must he be endu'd, who could at once manage so

* Neque enim quisquam hoc *Scipione* elegantius Inter-
valla Negotiorum Otio dispunxit; sempeque aut Belli,
aut Pacis servit Artibus; semper inter Arma, aut Studia
versatus, aut Corpus Periculis, aut Animum Disciplinis ex-
ercuit. *Vell. Pat. l. 1.*

many, and so different Affairs!

But herein lay his greatest Excellency, that he was not only knowing, but good; and what he is yet most of all to be esteem'd for, is that Purity of Manners, that exact Probity and sound Devotion, which were always observ'd in him, whether in the Leisure of Peace, or the Engagement of War. So different was his from the Temper of those *Hectors* who glory in Libertinism, and of those Politicians who have neither Conscience nor Religion, that he ever made an open Profession of Piety and Vertue, and regarded the Maxims of the Gospel, as the constant Rule of his Behaviour. He was not fix'd and bent upon the Earth, but had quite other Views than those of this World. The Gayety of things here below did not dazle his Eyes; he understood the Vanity of Human Greatness: and having this grand Principle of *Christianity* rooted in his Mind, *That nothing is truly valuable, but what is everlasting*, he look'd down with Scorn and Disdain upon all those Temporal things, which Men do so commonly admire and esteem.

These were his Opinions, and by them did he conduct himself during the whole course of his Life; but especially they were so prevailing in him for about twelve or thirteen Years before his Death, that after having settled his Domestick Affairs, and
marry'd

marry'd his Son the Marquess of *Livorno* to the Sister of the Prince of *Monaco*, he resolved to leave the Court, to forsake his Worldly Goods, and to lay aside his publick Employments, according to a Vow he had made some Years ago. The Duke and Dutches of *Savoy* being very loth to part with so useful a Minister, did all that lay in 'em to divert him from his Purpose; but finding that neither their Reasons nor Intreaties could prevail, they had recourse to *Pope Alexander VII.* and beseech'd him to use in this Juncture his utmost Authority.

Hereupon his Holiness order'd the Marquess of *Pianezza* to abide at Court, and to continue his Ministry there; which Command, however blunt and hard it might seem, yet was by him readily obey'd: having been bred up in the *Papish* Religion, he had learnt Submission to the *Holy See*, and rather than seem singular among those of that Communion, he sacrific'd his own Love of Solitude to the Observance of the Pope. Not but he still made very frequent Instances to *him* and to his Prince, that what he so earnestly desir'd might at length be granted; but all in vain; for he was not heard either at *Rome* or *Turin*: only he was permitted to withdraw now and then, between whiles, from the Embarrassments of the World, that he might the more sedately converse with God, and exercise the Offices of private Devotion.

The

01 The Sweetness he perceiv'd in these little Retreats, made him still more averse to the Court, and more desirous of Solitude and Quiet; yet could he never obtain this End of his Desire, till the Death of the aforementioned Pope. But then indeed he being dispens'd with from the Injunction of his *Holiness*, immediately retir'd from the Court, that so having liv'd there most of his time, he might at length depart elsewhere; or rather that he might die altogether to the World, and only live to God. Wherefore thence he betook himself to the Monastery of *St. Pancrace*, which he himself had built in his own Country of *Pianezza*.

There it was, that imitating in some sort the Abdication of * *Charles V.* he parted with all his Estate to the Marquess of † *Livorno* his Son, and resigned into the Hands of his Prince the Collar of the Order of the *Annunciata*, the greatest Badge of Honour which the Dukes of *Savoy* can bestow, and which, in token of his Merit, had been conferred on him by *Charles Emanuel II.* in the Year 1648. Also with this he gave up the Offices of Great Chamberlain, Privy-Counsellor of State, and Colonel General of the Infantry, that so he might embrace the Po-

* *Carolus ex tanto Rerum Dominatore jam nullus.* *Strad.*
de Bel. Belgic. Q. 3. † A Town in Piedmont, and not that
 which the English term Leghorn.

erty, and enjoy the Peace of the Gospel: For which Resolution he was more to be admir'd, than for all the other Actions of his Life, and undoubtedly became so much greater in the sight of God, by how much less he then appear'd in the sight of Men.

The Duke of Savoy was extremely surpriz'd and concern'd at his Retreat: but however his *Royal Highness* respected and lov'd the Marquess too well to withdraw him by Force from his Solitude; yet the Uneasiness he was then under at the want of him, put him upon seeking all the sweet and gentle Methods that might be thought on, to incline him to return. For which purpose, he believ'd that he could not do better, than by having the Case debated in a Council of Conscience, and standing to the Verdict of five very able Divines.

The Casuists that were consulted, found out a Temperament, or middle way between the Interest of the Sovereign, and the Vow of the Minister of State. After having soberly examin'd the matter, they gave it in as their Opinion, that the Marquess of *Pianezza* stood oblig'd by the Vow which he had made, to quit all the Benefits of the Court; but that his Engagement would still permit him to assist the State with his Counsels, upon very important occasions.

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The Duke of Savoy let him know the Judgment of the *Divines*, and withal so very earnestly press'd him to return, that then he had not the Heart to deny his *Highness*. Wherefore he left his Solitude of *St. Pancrace*, after the Example of those antient *Hermits*, whom Charity drew from the Deserts to the Assistance of their Neighbours. So he return'd once more to the Court, but afterwards retir'd again to the Priests of the *Mission*, with whom he continu'd till his Death.

The Life he there led, exactly resembl'd the Lives of the Primitive *Christians*; nothing could be more regular and humble, nothing more opposite to the Vanity and Poms of the World; here he made the Exercise of Piety and Holiness his whole Concern, spending his time in Meditation and Prayer, in doing good Works, and in reading good Books.

Having always had a particular Esteem for *St. Austin*, he was very industrious in perusing his Writings, which he did especially with this Design, that he might extract from 'em some pious Thoughts and Strains of Devotion; upon which account also he chiefly applied himself to his *Confessions*, out of which he selected the most devout and touching Passages, which a Gentleman of his Acquaintance publish'd in France not very long since, under this Title; *Piissimi in*

Deum

Deum Affectus Cordis ex D. Augustini Confessionibus delecti. Paris. apud Anton. Vitre. Betaking himself to a new kind of Life, he so renounc'd Luxury and Pride, those common Attendants of Greatness, that he left not any the least mark of Grandeur, either in his Person or Retinue. He wore a plain and modest Habit, and kept with him but one of his Domesticks to wait on him, so that one single Man made up all his Train; his Lodging was not beautified with costly Marbles, nor with any of those delicate Embellishments which the Vanity or Nicety of Men has invented. Whatever he had about him savour'd of the Poverty he embrac'd; nay that he might even forget his Birth, the noble Stock from which he descended, and so be set forth as an Example of the most profound Humility, he would not so much as seal his Letters with his own Coat of Arms, but chose rather to do it with the Seal of the House, in which he had fix'd himself. In short, he liv'd exactly like those Priests, to whom he retir'd; insomuch that whoever had seen him in that State to which his mighty Zeal reduc'd him, would hardly have believ'd him ever to have been either a great Lord, a great Commander, or a great Statesman.

What *Tacitus* reports of a famous General may truly be said of him; *That the Modesty and Plainness of his outward Figure caused ma-*

ny of those, who judg of great Men only by the pompous Appearance they make, to question his Merit and Fame, when they came to see him, and to be present with him *. Yet this plain, this humble Man is still the Oracle of the Court of Savoy; he is at the end of all Business, whether Foreign or Domestick, and no Resolution of Importance is ever fix'd upon in Council without his Approbation; tho now indeed he never comes to Court, but only when his Prince commands him, nor does he enter any further into Secrets of State, than he is by him oblig'd to do it; and even then, no sooner do's he come and give in his Opinion, touching what matters are laid before him, but the Spirit of God, who undoubtedly governs him, calls him back to his desir'd Solitude, and he as eagerly betakes himself again to his Spiritual Exercises, as if there was no such thing to be minded as a Prince or Court in the World.

Yet neither in this Retirement does he grow sour, ill-humor'd, or uneasy; nor does a strict Devotion, or sedentary Custom change his Temper in the least for the worse;

* Cultu modicus, Sermone facilis, uno aut altero Amicorum Comitatus, adeo ut plerique, quibus magnos Viros per Ambitionem aestimare mos est, viso aspectoque Agricola quaererent Famam, pauci interpretarentur. Tacit. in Vita Agri-

he is severe to none but himself, he is easy, courteous, and pleasant on all occasions, so far as is consistent with the Rules of Decency; in his ordinary Converse he is extremely agreeable, and utters a thousand pretty things: and when he speaks of God and Religion, he does that indeed in a reverential, but at once so moving a way, that by his Discourse he both edifies and charms all those that are about him.

Men of this Character are now great Rarities, and I much question whether former Ages can produce very many that deserv'd it; at least I know this, that all intelligent Persons have justly look'd on the Marquess of *Pianezza*, as one of the Wonders of his own time. Cardinal *Mazarin*, who was undoubtedly a competent Judg, said this of him, that he was endu'd with all those Accomplishments which can be desir'd in a great Man, and that a young Prince would be very happy in having so excellent a Governor. The Cardinal of *Richlieu* had also a mighty value for him, and greatly admir'd him on a certain occasion, when albeit he was not well pleas'd with him. The occasion I mean was this: when the Dutchess of *Savoy* in the Year 1639. went to *Grenoble*, all the Persons of Note who attended her thither, accepted of Pensions from this Minister of *France*; but the Marquess of *Pianezza*, whom the Princess had left at *Turin*,

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and

and thereupon made her Lieutenant General in *Piedmont*, stood out and refus'd the vast Sums that were offer'd him, applying to this purpose that Maxim of the Gospel, that *no Man can serve two Masters.*

Now the Marquess of *Pianezza* being a Person of so great Parts and Learning, of so great Piety and Vertue, as appears by the Specimen I have given of his Life, no wonder if *Sergio Gamberio* Archbishop of *Damas*, and the Pope's Nuncio in *Savoy*, look'd on him to be as able a Champion in the Field of Heroick Vertue, as he was in the Field of Martial Honour. Inasmuch as besides his deep Knowledg in the Springs of *Morality*, and of the grounds of Natural and Reveal'd Religion, he was also a Person of quick and clear Thought, and had a Faculty of clothing the gravest Reasonings in a Courtly Dress. Also the Post he was in, and the Business he went thro, had laid open to his View all the secret Movings of Human Temper, the Vices and Corruptions at once of City, Court and Country. Upon all which Accounts he seems as well to have been form'd by Nature, as fitted by Improvement, to defend *Christianity*; to oppose the most Ingenious, the most Polite, the most principl'd Impiety, and that by such a Solidity of Argument, such a Perspicuity of Method and neatness of Expression, as could not in all likelihood, but forcibly convince

the Judicious and subtle, and pleasingly win over the Light and Superficial, especially considering withal, that his Life was a Transcript of the *Gospel*; so that his Doctrines in this way could not fail of being countenanc'd by his Deeds.

Now the Example we know, even of a Person of low Degree, as being a sensible, is therefore a very prevailing Motive; so that it is found to work more of it self upon Human Inclinations, than Argument or Reason: and whenever it answers to, and falls in with the Argument or Reason, how mightily does it confirm and strengthen it, especially if it comes from a Person of Quality and Rank in the World! If one that moves in a great and lofty *Sphere*, not only speaks or writes well, but also acts and lives well; what an universal, what a prevailing Influence does he shed abroad! Tho the Truths he delivers may otherwise be as visible and clear as the Light, yet are they much better recommended to Peoples Acceptance, not only by good Sense and Discourse, but especially by the Character and Practice of an illustrious Defender; just as even the very Light it self is set off by the *Medium* thro which it passes, and by the intervention of a polish'd Chrystal, or the like, becomes the more glittering and bright.

Thus *Christianity* has never appear'd more Majestick and Plausible, than when Con-

Constantine the Good, as well as the Great, took upon him its Defence, and did himself make an Apology for it in the Council of *Nice*.

The *Heathen* Philosophers, who appear'd in that Assembly, were much more affected with the Discourse which the Emperor pronounc'd in favour of *Christ's* Divinity, than with the Writings of all the former Apologists: They could not entertain the least Suspicion of so illustrious a Testimony; they firmly believ'd that this Prince, as having no manner of Interest to embrace a Doctrine which his Predecessors had oppos'd, would never have been brought over to it, but by the pure Force of Truth.

All the great Orators of *Athens* and *Rome* did not seem to them to have near so much Eloquence, as an *Hero* become famous by his Victories and Vertues; or rather, they were convinc'd that the Gospel, which so much offended 'em before, contained nothing in it but what is most reasonable and good, when they heard it asserted by so August, so Sacred a Mouth, e'en as if the Words and Deeds of great Men were a sort of Oracles, able to give Light to the darkest Mysterys, and perswade the most incredible Truths.

What is thus truly reported of *Constantine* is not only applicable to Kings and Princes, but also, in some proportion, to those who attend 'em, either as Favourites or Ministers of State; for the Authority which the Sovereign

Sovereign imparts to them, and the Glory which every way furrounds them, casts as it were reflexive Beams upon all their Words and Actions, and gives both Weight and Lustre to all that they say or do. When therefore the Nobleman and the Courtier, the Statesman and the Soldier do at once concenter and meet in the *Christian* Director and the *Pious* Man, as we find that they did in the Marquess of *Pianezza*, what a most happy Conjunction is this! And what a good, what a general Influence must it needs have upon the various Ranks of Men! Surely this will dam up Vice, as it were in the Fountain-Head; and having first given a check to its Rise among the High, will thereby prevent it from ever descending among the Low.

With good Reason therefore, I say, did the aforementioned *Prelate* entertain a great Opinion of this Marquess's Capacity and Opportunity for advancing God's Glory, and accordingly advise him to appear in the Defence of *Christianity* against the Corruptions of the Age, and particularly of the Court which he attended. But he, notwithstanding his being thus qualified, was unwilling to acknowledg what others knew of him, and modestly distrusted his Ability for performing a Work of this nature. However at length, what thro the need he saw there was of it, what thro the Importunity of the

Archbishop, he set himself about it; and considering that the Faith of *Christ* was at the first established by very unlikely Methods, God having chosen *the weak things of the World to confound the things that are mighty*, he so much the more eagerly took upon him its Defence, by how much less he thought that he was able to defend it,

What he had to say upon this Subject, he digested and made publick some time before his Retirement; and then having turn'd his Thoughts this way was, I believe, one great occasion of his leaving the Court. For when a Man is once perswaded of the Truth of *Christianity*, he is soon convinc'd of the Vanity of the World, and is easily brought to renounce it.

How far our Author's Performance has answer'd Expectation, will best appear from a Perusal of it. Herein his principal Design is to prove that the *Christian* Religion is the only true Religion; in pursuing which Aim, he ranges all the Propositions he lays down in a *Geometrical* Order, so as that the last presuppose the first, and all of them depend upon some most evident Principles, from which they follow by a natural Consequence.

First having laid down this, as a ground of the whole Discourse, that besides some Propositions evident by the bare Light of Nature, there be others which carry in them

a *Moral* Evidence, and cannot be reasonably questioned; he proves that there is a God, and that the Providence of this God is over his Works. Next from the supposal of a God and a Providence, he infers the Necessity of a true Religion. After that, to discern and find out the true Religion, he shews what are the essential Characters of it: That it must needs propose to Man the most noble and perfect End; must teach nothing but what is conformable, not contrary to Reason, tho sometimes it be indeed above it. In a word, that it ought to be reveal'd by God, and to have evident Proofs of its being thus reveal'd, so as that it cannot be called in question, without an extreme Imprudence, or an invincible Obstinacy. Lastly he shews, that all these Characters are found in none but the *Christian* Religion; and this he does with so much clearness and force of Argument, that whoever reads over his Treatise, according to the Order and Connection of the Maxims he there lays down, will be forc'd to acknowledg, that if the *Christian* Religion be false, nothing at all is true.

He has seldom intermingled in the Body of his Discourse any Passages of *Scripture*, or the *Fathers*, because those he knew would be of no force, but wholly insignificant to those whom he opposes; and therefore whatever of this kind he has placed in the Margent, and

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blended the Sense of it together with his own, is rather design'd to comfort the Faithful, than to convert Infidels and Libertines. Once he makes use of *Seneca's* Authority, tho for no other Reason, as he himself says, but that he may shame those who deny a God, or have not a sufficiently noble Idea of him, by opposing against them the Testimony of a Heathen.

Whereas there are a multitude of trifling Objections that may be urg'd against *Christianity*, to answer all which severally it would take up whole Volumes; he solves 'em all in general, by shewing that a thing is not therefore false, because we do not know, or cannot comprehend it; nay, that so far is it from this, that what relates to the Godhead would for this very Reason appear to be false, if we could entirely know and comprehend it; and that it is impossible, that what most evidently appears to have been reveal'd by God should not be true. Also he has remark'd by the way, that things which may seem to be Absurdities in *Faith*, are far from being really so, and that they are found to be adorable Mysteries when examined attentively and without Prejudice.

Having said thus much of the Author and his Treatise, not to prevent, but rather to prepare the Readers Judgment; I come now to say something touching the Occasion and
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the Manner of my dressing the noble Foreigner in an *English* Garb.

The Truth of it is, while I was traversing the difficult ways of Saving Knowledge, and making the nicest Enquiries into the first grounds of Religion (of which I intend shortly to give some account) I chanc'd to meet with this *Christian Hero*, who was so obliging as to give me a true Direction in his own Language, which I well enough took and understood, and receiv'd great Benefit by it: Whereupon I thought my self bound to make some further use of it; and that the same generous Principle which mov'd him to be thus kind to me, tho an utter Stranger to him, ought much rather to move me also to be kind to others of my Country and *Acquaintance*, who, tho they all of 'em have the like occasion to go the same way, yet many of 'em know it not, nor can they take this useful Direction to assist 'em, as not understanding the Speech of him that gave it.

Wherefore I thought I had at least as much Reason to translate, as our Author had to compose this Treatise, and so to make him speak *English*, as formerly he had done *Italian* and *French*; especially considering the Worth of his Composure in the Judgment of others, which may be well guess'd at from the Acceptance it has had with two eminent Archbishops, to whom it has been dedi-

dedicated*, and from the present Scarcity of it in both those Foreign Languages, which shews it to have been universally approv'd beyond the Seas. To which I add the Judgment of many discerning Persons here at home, who have perus'd and prais'd it beyond what others have publish'd of this kind, or at least have thought that no other Treatise of this Subject and Bulk, excepting only that of the learned *Grotius*, can come in competition with it. As to which I myself have also moderately considered, that the Matter, Method and Stile of these two Authors is altogether different; that *Grotius* is indeed very full and solid, that the Marquess of *Pianezza* is no less so, but withal his way of reasoning and uttering himself is more lively and agreeable; so that while some may relish and benefit by the former, others may be pleased and profited by the latter: and thus both of 'em may be useful in their way, that is, they may conduce to put a stop to Libertinism, which, as some have not improbably guess'd, has made its Tour from *Italy* to *France*, and from thence to *England*. Wherefore having found the Medicine providentially plac'd near to the Distemper, I thought my self concern'd to

* In the Italian to the Archbishop of Damas. In the French to the Archbishop of Ambrun.

transplant it from the Soil in which it first grew, and to apply it here as an Antidote or Remedy, to prevent or cure the Contagion that has spread into these Parts; letting the *British* Nation at once see, by the *Example* of our Author, that the Church and the Court are not Enemies to each other, that Vertue and Nobility, Religion and Policy, Learning and Arms, are not inconsistent, but may very well stand together, as we find they did in him. Let this then excuse my Publication of this Treatise, provided withal, that my Zeal for God's Glory has not been so unhappy as to dishonour my Author, that my pouring of his rich Essences out of one Vessel into another has not impair'd their Genuine Odour. As touching my Care to avoid which Miscarriage, I frankly tell the Reader, that I have not indeed confin'd my self to his Words; but having first, as I think, found out his meaning, I afterwards expressed it as well as I could, and come as near as possible to his Native Elegance; that so I have endeavour'd to give the true Sense of the Author, having never lost the sight of him, or gone quite out of the way he went in; altho indeed I have not always walk'd at his Heels, nor trod in the very same Steps.

Considering that the Genius and Turn of our Language are very different from those of the *Italian*, I have accordingly made a
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proportionate Variation in the Schemes of Speech, and substituted equivalent Idioms and Phrases in the room of those in the Original. By which means, as I have been careful to prevent my Version from being flat or insipid, nay from being barbarous, and full as unintelligible to a plain *English* Man, as even the *Italian* it self; so have I at once endeavoured to preserve that Sublimity and Gravity of Stile, in which, as becomes the Subject, it was at first written.

If in taking this course I have at all err'd, I have err'd with no less Masters than *Tully* and *St. Jerom*, who in translating took this Freedom, and recommended the same to others. The former of them owns he did so, in turning the *Protagoras* of *Plato*, the *Oeconomicks* of *Xenophon*, and two fine *Orationes* of *Æschines* and *Demosthenes* oppos'd against each other: and the latter taking *him* for an Example, freely declares, that excepting when he meddl'd with *Scripture*, whose very Words and Phrases are Mysterious and Sacred, he was not exact to render *Verbum è Verbo*, but to give the true Sense of an Original, according to the Genius of the Tongue into which he turn'd it*.

* D. Hieronym. Epist. ad Pammach. de optimo Genere interpretandi. Tom. 2. Pag. 365.

But in reference to my Edition of this Tract, I have this further to add and account for, that I have not only translated our Author's Sense, but have here and there alter'd or left it out, where I found it disagreeable to Truth and Scripture; which, notwithstanding wherever it occurs, I satisfy the Reader, is of such a nature, that as it could not tend to support the main Proofs of *Christianity*, so neither is it so closely interwoven with his way of proposing 'em, as that the leaving of it out does any way interrupt the Series of the Treatise, or weaken the prime grounds of the *Christian Religion*.

But lest after having own'd this it should still be judg'd, that I have defalcated some necessary part, and thereby injured the *Original*, I think fit to tell the Reader what it is I have new model'd or cast off, and after that shall leave him candidly to judg of my Reasons for it.

Our Author, tho he was a Person of so great Parts and Improvements, as I have before observ'd, yet was subject, as well as other Men, to some particular Failures; touching some of which I shall briefly note such Passages in his Book, as are either plainly erroneous, or liable at least to the Censure of some. But whereas there are but only two of this kind that are material, excepting what he has uttered merely as a *Papist*, I shall

shall in the first place single out those, and afterwards note the others in their Order.

1st. Then I remark a Passage that occurs in his 5th Chapter, where having shewn the Preeminence of *Christianity* above *Judaism*, *Mahometism*, and *Paganism* in general, he particularly touches at the gross Extravagance of the Eastern Religions, which he might indeed well do upon various accounts: And thus his main drift is indeed to be approv'd, tho his Charge in one respect does no way hold good; namely, that the *Mandarines* of *China* deny the Immortality of the Soul and the Providence of God, which Assertions from many late Accounts of the *Chinese* I find to be absolutely false. I confess indeed that they, as well as other *Heathens*, have been guilty of a multitude of Errors, both as to Faith and Practice. But I do not find, if Human Testimony be of any Credit, that in points depending on the bare Light of Nature, they were any way inferior, as to Knowledg or Morals, to the antient *Greeks* or *Romans*.

This I the rather thought fit to remark, because it would be of dangerous Consequence, that this Suggestion should be thought to be true, and that two such grand Articles of Natural Religion should be believ'd to be deny'd by any Nation in general, or by the most sensible Persons in it, and especially by

so discerning, so polite a one as that of *China*. Wherefore in point of Prudence I have left out this Passage, as being at once false, and withal of no Importance to the matter in hand.

2^{ly}. I remark a doubtful Passage in his 7th Chapter, where he makes the Rays, the Light and Heat of the Sun, as also the Powers of the rational Soul, not only to differ among themselves; but withal supposes the one to differ from the Solar Body, and the other from the Soul. The *Neotericks* at least, will find ground to criticize upon this in point of mere *Philosophy*: But to moderate the matter in point of *Theology*, as it is here applied, I say that whether these Positions be true or false, it is not very material to his purpose, and therefore I need not further intermeddle in the Controversy. The Doctrine of the *Trinity*, as it is asserted in *Scripture*, will stand firm enough without such Parallels brought to explain it.

But again it is observable, that our Author was born and bred in a *Popish* Climate; that there by consequence he suck'd in a Complication of Errors, even from the Breasts: which it is not so much to be wonder'd, that even a Person of his Sense did not afterwards correct; because tho, as we have seen, he was able to search very nicely after Truth, yet it being made a matter of Conscience in the Church of *Rome*,
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not curiously to examine, but implicitly and at a venture to credit the Doctrines which it teaches, it is very probable that the Marquess of *Pianezza* being tinctur'd by Custom, and sway'd by that Authority, did not bend his Thoughts to search into, nor by consequence did so well understand the Case of Religion, as it stands between *Protestant* and *Papist*, as he did the grounds of *Christianity* in general, which can bear the Test of the nicest Scrutiny, and appear the more reasonable the more they are examin'd.

Wherefore touching what he drop'd in his Book as a *Papist*, I 3^{ly}. remark, that in his 5th Chapter he says, that great Souls are bound to preserve an entire Chastity, and always to abide in a State of Virginity. Now not to stand here to confute this Error, which has been already done by many other Hands, I only say, that with very good Reason and Scripture on my side, I have so far alter'd and mitigated this Passage, as to make it suit with a *Protestant* Relish.

4^{thly}. I remark in the Chapter aforesaid, that our Author speaking of the Sanctity and Venerableness of *Christians* beyond other Men, reckons, with the Instances of *St. James the Less* and *St. Anthony*, those of *Francis of Assis* and *Xavier*. As to which I say, that I cannot allow the latter to stand upon a level with the former, nor that they have an equal Right to Saintship; yet in point

point of Charity, as they were *Christians*, tho *Papists*, I am apt to think that they meant well, and were exemplary in their Generations.

5thly. I remark in the same 5th Chapter, that he also affirms, that *Christians are bound to embrace a voluntary Poverty*. As to which I have observ'd, and have thus far chang'd his Sense, that *Christians* ought indeed to be content in a State of Poverty and Want, whenever the Providence of God or the Terms of the Gospel do place 'em in, or call 'em to it: but that they are not otherwise obliged to run themselves into it; nor to throw away the Gifts of God, whose *Blessing it is that maketh rich*, but to use 'em for his Glory, with Prudence, Charity and Moderation.

6thly. I observe in the 8th Chapter, our Author's regard to the *Pope* as an universal Bishop. Indeed he very well takes notice before, that the Continuance of the *Christian Church* in its Purity for so many Ages is a mark of a Providence over it, and that its Doctrines came from God, who still vouchsafes to prosper and support 'em. But he might have spar'd the tagging of these Words to the former; viz. *under one universal Head*; by which I suppose he means the *Pope*, as a *visible Head* of the Church, whose Pretence to this Character has been so well baff'd by most of the Protestant Writers, and by the

Historians of the Rise and Progress of *Papacy*, that I need say no more of it here.

7thly. I remark in the same 8th Chapter, the Flings our Author has at *Luther* and *Calvin*; which only shew how much he was bigotted to the Church of *Rome*, and prejudic'd against the *Reformers*, while what he says does no way affect his main Argument, and therefore may be look'd on as trifling and impertinent, it being brought in only by way of Similitude; where having said, that had the first Preachers of the Gospel been Impostors, they would very probably have suited their Doctrine, as *Luther* did his, to the Lusts of Men, and permitted all manner of Licentiousness; or as he again intimates, tho they might indeed have exhorted others to Martyrdom, yet like *Calvin*, they would never have been willing to expose themselves to it. Now again I say, touching the former of these Imputations, that I can more safely deny than he asserts it, from what has been impartially written of *Luther*, and the things transacted in his Time. Also touching the latter I say, that I know not any occasion that *Calvin* ever had to expose himself to Martyrdom, or that he ever did or was likely to have refus'd it, had he been put to suffer it in the Cause which he maintain'd.

Lastly, I remark in the Chapter aforesaid, that our Author has very well asserted the

Truth

Truth of *Christianity*, as prov'd by Miracles at its first Propagation, and as the true History of these Miracles has been very faithfully transmitted down to us. This Argument thus manag'd is invincible, so that he needed not to have carried it further: But whereas in pretending to satisfy the modern *Libertine*, he affirms that Miracles are continu'd even to this Day, and that within the Pale of the *Christian Church*; Here indeed he carries the matter too far, here I plainly perceiv'd that he was out of his way, and thereupon resolved not to follow him any further, till I found him got into it again.

Great pity it is that *Popery* should have so much leaven'd his Understanding, as that the Errors of it should run thro and mar his solid Reasonings, that in the view of its Opposers they should discredit the Cause, and render the Truth of *Christianity* suspicious, which before he had so manfully defended! Surely had he but impartially considered what a Miracle is, and what is the true Design of it, he could not have fallen into this Mistake. For pray what is a Miracle? And for what end may we suppose it to be wrought? It is an unusual Event above the course of Nature, it is in effect a Production of something out of nothing, either as to the thing it self, or the manner of producing it; which as it can be principally done by none but God, so is it not

done by *him* at all Adventures. It cannot be supposed, that at every turn he controlls, suspends, or alters those Laws of Nature, which his unerring Wisdom ordain'd and establish'd; but that he does this only when there is an absolute occasion for it. As to which I will not presume so far to limit the Divine Wisdom and Power, as to say, when and when only God may see an absolute occasion for, and so does work a Miracle. But taking it for granted, that he *never does any thing in vain*, and that whenever he does what is extraordinary, with reference to Men, it is that they may take a particular notice of it, as *the doing of the Lord*; I modestly suppose that then, and perhaps then only, he thinks fit to do this, when it is needful to convince Mankind beyond exception, that he approves and likes this or that, which by a subordinate Agent is presented to their choice; then does he think it proper to sign the Commission with his own *broad Seal*, and to give the thing propos'd free Passage and Acceptance in the World; he stamps it with a certain Mark of Divinity, by doing that in favour of it, which none but himself can do.

This we find he did in regard to the *Christian* Religion, when and so long as there was an occasion for it, that is, when it first of all appear'd, and untill the Doctrines of it were so far spread and settled, as that for

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the future it must have been the fault of Mens Wills not to believe and embrace them. But when this was done, he who is infinitely wise, and always acts with some excellent Design, who governs Mankind according to their Natures, and does not do that in a supernatural way to move their Inclinations, to which they had ground enough to be inclin'd without it; but who acts with a reserve to the Freedom of their Wills, when once their Minds have had good Reasons of Conviction, and their Affections have been touch'd with the lively Motives of Reward or Punishment: then I say, he who is infinitely wise, leaves them to use their own Powers, and the ordinary means appointed to them for the Steerage of their Lives.

Whence I cannot but infer, that now, as there is no need or occasion, so very probably there is no real Miracle done in regard to Religion, at least not within the Pale of *Christianity*; I say, not within the Pale of *Christianity*, and where it is already promulg'd and settl'd; for I will not presume absolutely to limit that Promise of our Saviour, that they who believe in his Name, *shall cast out Devils, and do many Miracles* *: Nor consequently will I deny, but that even

* Mark 16. 17, 18.

in these last Ages of the World, if any generous, any Primitive spirited *Christians* should out of a great and deep Sense of the Truth of *Christianity*, and Tenderness to the Souls of Men, endeavour in Heathen Countries to convert *Infidels*, and bring 'em over to the Faith of *Christ*, God may still make way for the Belief and Acceptance of the Gospel by the unquestionable Testimony of Miracles. Notwithstanding I do not think this to be so absolutely needful at this time, even in the darkest Corners of the Earth, and much less where the Light of *Christianity* brightly shines, as it was in the first Propagation of it; because now, besides the undeniable grounds we can produce of the Truth of the *ancient* Miracles, besides that they have undergone the Test of time, have been discuss'd for so many Ages past, and not the least Flaw found in 'em, which makes 'em to be at least as credible in themselves to those who now hear of 'em, as they were to those who at the first saw 'em. Moreover, the Design of 'em has been carry'd on, has been still countenanc'd and confirm'd by other standing Tokens of Omnipotence. Such are the wonderful Propagation and Support of the Gospel, by the most unlikely Methods, and against the strongest Oppositions, the Overthrow of *Satan's* Kingdom in the World, the astonishing Effects of a Divine Spirit in the Souls of those *Martyrs*, of those
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many wise, discerning Persons, who have laid down their Lives, and all that was dear to 'em in this World, for the sake of *Christ*. These and many other succeeding Proofs of the Truth of *Christianity*, added to the certain Account we have of the ancient Miracles that were done in its behalf, may be urg'd upon *Infidels*, as more Authentick Reasons for the Truth of its *Divinity*, than if new ones were done before their Eyes: so that to convert even such Persons, it may not perhaps be absolutely needful that God should again employ his extraordinary Method; but it is as probable, that together with the help of the Evidences aforesaid, he may now accomplish this grand Design, by the invisible workings of his Grace upon the Hearts of the unconverted, by inclining and moving 'em within, and by some extraordinary Providences without.

But however this be, and I cannot absolutely say that *Xavier* and others have not, or may not work Miracles by the Power of God, without the Verge of *Gospel-Light*, while his or their Intention has been, or may be sincere and pure; and they only design to propagate true Religion, and not to promote a secular Interest: yet within the Verge of this Light, since the time that *Christianity* receiv'd a full Settlement, I have very good Reason to assert that there neither have been, nor will be any Miracles; as there is no

need there will be none to confirm, much less will there be any to oppose *Christianity*.

Wherefore I shall not with our Author answer the *Deist* in his Folly, nor discredit Truth by Imposture, telling him that there are new Miracles, which he may now see, and be thereby convinc'd of a Divine Power; but shall flatly tell him, that he is without excuse, if he does not believe, and is not perswaded by the old ones. But you'll say, how came a Person of his Sense and Integrity, as to other matters, to be so much in the wrong, as either to be deceiv'd himself, or at least to aim at deceiving others, by backing that Cause with Falshood and Forgery, which needed no such Method to support it; by asserting such matters of Fact in its behalf as have been never done, or if they have, yet are they misapplied to the Purpose for which he brings 'em, even in the Judgment of *Papists* themselves, who if they would confess, never have and never would think of new Miracles any more than the Protestants, as needful to support the *Christian* Faith in general, where it is already planted: But they have been put upon this Shift merely to authorise their new Corruptions and Superstitions. As to which I further observe, that this is; even as if God should display his Power in an extraordinary way, only to contradict and discredit his own Word, to pull down the Work which

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he had before built, namely the *Christian Religion*, as profess'd among *Protestants*, which even the *Romanists* themselves cannot deny to be grounded on the *Scriptures*; who therefore rejecting the Evidence of these, have recourse to Tradition, and the Infallibility of their Church.

Indeed I will not deny, but that as we are now in a State of Probation, and *Satan* is very diligent to set up his Kingdom of Darkness against the Kingdom of Light, God to try our Faith, may permit wicked Men, either by their own, or by the Craft and Power of evil Spirits, to do seeming Miracles, and that in opposition to those Doctrines which were at first establish'd by real ones. But against all such Pretenders God has arm'd me to take heed with *St. Austin*, where he says, *that in the last times shall arise false Christs and false Prophets, and shall shew great Signs and Wonders* *; not real Miracles, but, as the *Apostle* speaks, *lying Wonders* †, because brought to confirm a Lye: *Insomuch that if it were possible, they shall deceive the very Elect*; that is, if it could be that even well-grounded Habitual *Christians* should not stand upon their Guard, and use the utmost Care and Prudence to distinguish these Feats from the Works of

* Mat. 24. 24. † 2 Thess. 2. 9.

God, they might be in danger of being deceiv'd, and brought to reject the Truths of the Gospel for the sake of what they fancy to be Miracles, as before they embrac'd 'em for the sake of what *indeed* were so *.

Wherefore as to the present purpose, I grant indeed that many *strange things* may have been done by designing *Papists*, to confirm their unwritten, unscriptural Doctrines: But withal I add, that many more of these too have been *said* to have been done, than ever were so: And when once they are got into the Romantick Strain, no wonder if they tell us at least of such things, as would, if ever done, amount to real Miracles. But what further Reason we have to suspect such Narratives, may be guess'd from the ingenuous Confession of a learned *Romanist*; I speak it, says he, rather out of Grief, than with a design to disparage any Man, that *Diogenes Laertius* among the *Greeks*, and *Suetonius* among the *Latins*, have more faithfully and sincerely set down the Lives and Acts of the Philosophers and Emperors, than *Catholicks* have chronicl'd the Doings of their Martyrs, Virgins, Saints and Confessors †.

* Contra Mirabularios istos cautum me fecit Deus meus, &c. *August. In Joan. Tract. 3.* † Dolenter hoc potius quam contumeliose dico, &c. *Melchior Canus in Operib. L. 11. C. 6.*

But what shall we say to those Instances of Miracles related by our Author, whose Judgment and Veracity one would think might be relied on? First he tells us of one Miracle wrought at *Naples* upon Father *Marcel Mastrilli*, who being almost kill'd by a Blow on his Head was cur'd in a moment by *Francis Xavier*; of another done at *Saragossa* in the Kingdom of *Aragon*, upon a Man, who thro the Intercession of the *Virgin Mary*, recover'd his Leg, which had been cut off and buried five or six Years ago; and of another done in *Savoy* upon one *John Sa*, who by Prayer recover'd his Tongue, which had been cut out at the very Root several Years before.

Now, besides what I have already discour'd in general, touching the Improbability of such matters in the present State of the *Christian Church*; I further add, as to these particular Instances, that tho I will not say that a Person of our Author's Character endeavour'd to impose upon others, yet is it very likely that he was impos'd upon himself, especially considering that he does not assert either of these Facts upon his own Personal Knowledg; and no wonder then, if one, who was bigotted to that Church, which stands in great need of Impostures to support it, and which therefore prohibits Enquiries into 'em, taking these things upon Trust was deceiv'd; and therefore

God, they might be in danger of being deceiv'd, and brought to reject the Truths of the *Gospel* for the sake of what they fancy to be Miracles, as before they embrac'd 'em for the sake of what *indeed* were so *.

Wherefore as to the present purpose, I grant indeed that many *strange things* may have been done by designing *Papists*, to confirm their unwritten, unscriptural Doctrines: But withal I add, that many more of these too have been *said* to have been done, than ever were so: And when once they are got into the Romantick Strain, no wonder if they *tell us at least* of such things, as would, if ever done, amount to real Miracles. But what further Reason we have to suspect such Narratives, may be guess'd from the ingenuous Confession of a learned *Romanist*; I speak it, says he, rather out of Grief, than with a design to disparage any Man, that *Diogenes Laertius* among the *Greeks*, and *Suetonius* among the *Latins*, have more faithfully and sincerely set down the Lives and Acts of the Philosophers and Emperors, than *Catholicks* have chronicl'd the Doings of their Martyrs, Virgins, Saints and Confessors†.

* Contra Mirabularios istos cautum me fecit Deus meus, *Aug.*
August. In Joan. Tract. 3. † Dolenter hoc potius quam contumeliose dico, *Aug.* Melchior Canus in *Operib. L. 11. C. 6.*

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fore upon the Presumption that he was so, I have either left out or alter'd about six Pages of the Original to this purpose. In doing which I have been careful to make the Transition exact from one Part to the other, and to keep the true Proofs of *Christianity* entire. With good Reason I dissented from and left my Author, where he plainly took an erroneous Path, but at length overtook him, so soon as I found him in the right way again, where we kindly shook Hands, and travel'd together to our Journys end.

Having thus turn'd the Speech, and adapted the Sense of our *Italian Popish* Writer to the Capacity and the Taſt of the *Engliſh Protestant* Reader, and made him ſay no more than what might come from the Pen of a *Chriſtian* at large, I now think my Countrymen may eaſily, ſafely, nay and profitably converſe with him; which that they may do is the end I propoſe of my Pains about him, and the Succeſs which I earneſtly deſire.

THE

C H A P. IV.

THE

T A B L E.

The Author's INTRODUCTION
to his TREATISE.

C H A P. I.

THAT *there is a God, who is a most pure
and most perfect Being.*

C H A P. II.

*The several Parts of the World prove that
there is a God, that God is a pure Spirit,
and that his Providence is over his Works.*

C H A P. III.

*That there must needs be one true Religion, and
that Men are capable of knowing it.*

C H A P.

C H A P. IV.

Marks of the true Religion, that these Marks are found in none but the Christian.

C H A P. V.

That is the true Religion which leads its Professors to what is most perfect, and whose Principles are conformable to the pure Lights of Reason. The Christian Religion has this Advantage.

C H A P. VI.

The true Religion must needs teach things which are above Reason; also it ought to be reveal'd by God. The Christian Religion bears these Characters.

C H A P. VII.

What the Christian Religion teaches and proposes to Men, as reveal'd by God, tho it be above, yet is not contrary to Reason.

C H A P. VIII.

Christianity has such evident Proofs of its being reveal'd by God, that unless a Man be void of all Prudence, and a downright Enemy of Truth, he cannot but embrace it.

The

The Author's own INTRODUCTION to the following
TREATISE.

THE Truth of some Propositions is so plainly to be seen by the bare Light of Nature, that it can in no wise be call'd in question. As for example, that *Nothing cannot give a Being to it self, nor to any thing else; that no thing can give that which it has not; and that the Perfection of the Cause is best judg'd of by the Perfection of the Effect.*

Likewise the Truth of some Moral Propositions is known by the Light of Nature, and indeed so clearly that it can't be contradicted, unless barely by the Mouth, but against the *Conscience* and inward Perswasion; excepting it be among some barbarous People, so blinded and degenerated by vicious Habits, that they have even put off all the Sentiments of *Humanity*, and transform'd themselves as it were into Beasts: Such Propositions are these that follow; namely, *that Gratitude is due to Benefactors;*
that

that *Parents are to be honour'd, Superiors obey'd*; and *that we ought to do by others as we would that they should do by us.*

As to the former kind of Propositions, no one that knows the meaning of 'em, and is in his Senses, can call 'em in question; and the latter are universally assented to by all that have the least Spark of *Reason*: tho indeed it often happens thro the Wickedness of Mans *Heart*, that they are rejected when they should be practised.

He that builds on these two sorts of Principles, in attaining to the knowledg of the most obscure and lofty things, will make but little progress that way, unless he be also assisted by some other Propositions, the Certainty of which one may indeed question without a downright Stupidity and Brutishness, but not without a very great Imprudence. Such Propositions are said to carry in 'em only a *Moral Evidence*; and to this purpose, at once both *Reason* and *Experience* tell us, that excepting certain first Principles, or some very gross and palpable Notions, we have a clear and sure knowledg of but very few things.

God thought fit that the greatest part of Human Affairs should be manag'd by Likelihood and Probability, without any further search for Evidence and Certainty. And indeed he that should resolve never to act, but by the Guidance of infallible *Light*,
would

would scarcely act at all in the Commerce of the World. To require a *certain* Knowledge in all our Actions, is plainly to renounce Discretion and Prudence. We should be even forc'd to abandon all the Duties of *Civil Life*, and to conduct our selves little better than Brutes, if before every Step that we take it were absolutely needful that we *clearly* apprehend our Obligations to 'em.

In a word, it is past all doubt, that in things which are not capable of an entire Evidence, a Man is in the wrong to hesitate and doubt, whether or no he shall take that side which carries with it the greatest Evidence, especially when the not doing so must needs put him to a considerable Damage; for which Reason, even those who foolishly deny that *Truth* can be found, or that there is more *Probability* in one Proposition than another, do themselves abandon, and at once advise their Followers to abandon that beloved Indifferency in all those Cases, wherein it is proper and advantageous for 'em to resolve and act. Wherefore I shall at once make use as well of this as of the aforesaid kinds of *Evidence*, that I may solidly handle the most weighty Concern of this Life, namely, the Knowledge of a *God*, upon which the true *Religion* and all its other Tenets are grounded.

Upon the Knowledge of a *God* I shall accordingly establish the Knowledge of the true *Religion*, by which *God* is pleas'd to be yet further known and serv'd; and after that I shall shew that this *Religion* must needs be embrac'd, in order to Eternal *Happiness*, which is the last End of Man. Nor that there is any ground to imagine that the Existence of *God* cannot be prov'd without the help of *Moral Evidence*, and by such conclusive Reasons as are strong enough to baffle those *Libertines*, who vainly pretend to Parts and Wit; nor likewise that I think the choice of the true *Religion* to be a pure Work of Nature.

For as to the first of these Points, I am of Opinion that the certain Knowledge of a *God* is easy to the most soaring, capacious *Minds*, which can by themselves exactly judg of the Evidence of a Demonstration: But that it is not so easy to vulgar *Understandings*, the Instruction of whom is the principal Design of this Discourse; for this Reason I thought my self oblig'd to make use of *Moral Evidence*, which is absolutely needful, at least to *them*. Also as to the second point, tho it may indeed be demonstrated by *Natural Reason*, that there is a true *Religion*, and that we are bound to embrace it; yet without the assistance of *Grace* we cannot embrace it as we ought, because all the Care of him that teaches, and all the

Docility

Truth of the Christian Religion. 51

Docility of him that learns, are to no purpose, unless God particularly inspire and assist 'em both.

Thus, that we might in some sense deserve to receive so excellent a *Truth*, which proceeds not from Human *Understanding*, but from the Divine Goodness; it was expedient that it should not be of the number of those *Truths*, to which the *Mind* of Man is as it were forc'd to yield its *Assent*, even whether it will or no; but of those which a well-dispos'd *Will* makes agreeable to the *Mind*, and the Belief whereof becomes praise-worthy by a free *Consent*.

C H A P. I.

That there is a God, who is a most pure and most perfect Being.

TO begin my Proof of *God's Existence*, I say, that one or t'other of these Propositions must needs be true; either that *Nothing* preceded *Being*, at least a Moment; or that it did not. If it preceded, but a Moment, all actual *Being*, it is certain that no *Thing* either has been or can be; unless it could be produc'd either by *nothing*, or by it self. As for *nothing*, it is plain that it cannot produce any *thing*; and it is also absurd

to suppose that it could give to it self a *Being* before it had one.

Wherefore if the Existence of the *things* we behold be unquestionably real, and not a mere Dream or *Chimera*, it must be own'd that *nothing* has not preceded all actual *Being*, even a Moment; and withal that some *thing* has existed from all Eternity.

This *thing* that existed from all Eternity, either holds its being from it self, and independently on any other; and also gives a *Being* to all other *things*, either mediately or immediately: or all things that are or have been, depend on each other by Succession, by Degrees, without any first *Principle*. There can be no middle Proposition between these two, and I shall clearly prove the Impossibility of the second.

All *things* that are, or ever have been put together, exist either of themselves, or depend on some other Principle; it cannot be said that they depend on some other Principle, because if all be put together, as we suppose, without this general Assemblage there can no other *thing* be found. Now if no other Principle can be found, it is plain that all *things* put together cannot depend upon it; and by consequence they must have been and had the Root or Source of their Existence, purely from themselves; which Root or Source, according to our present Supposition, must needs be self-existent and inde-

independent on any other thing without this general Assemblage. Now I maintain that this Universe or general Assemblage, consider'd at once with all its parts, which are so numerous and dependent on each other, cannot be this Source, this self-existent *thing*; by consequence it must be some single part of this *Aggregate* or *Whole*, that is independent and self-existent, and the Spring and Support of all the rest.

Thus must it needs be own'd, that there is a self-existent, independent *Being*, on which all other things depend; which is the first Member of my disjunctive Proposition. Withal it must be own'd, that this *Being* could never cease to exist and act, even for a Moment; and that neither *nothing*, nor any other *Being*, has in any point of Duration, or in any sense, preceded its Existence. It could not be preceded by *nothing*, because then, as I have shewn, it could never have existed at all; nor could it be preceded by any other *Being*, because this *Being* must then be suppos'd to have been self-existent, and in no wise dependent on it. Wherefore this self-existent, this independent *Being*, which was not preceded either by *nothing* or any other *Being*, has no Principle, but is eternal and unoriginated.

I might here take occasion to confute all those Sophisms and trifling Objections, by which *Libertines* endeavour to weaken or

clude this solid Reasoning ; but such kind of Subtleties being disagreeable to the Intent of this Discourse, it will be most proper for me now to mention what is next in order, namely, that this *Being* is *necessary* and all others *contingent*, whether they be actual or only possible ; that what has a *necessary* Existence can never cease to be, for if so, its Existence would be *contingent* ; that it could not have an *Efficient Cause*, forasmuch as it is independent and self-existent ; nor a *material* or *formal Cause*, forasmuch as it cannot be naturally compounded or generated, cannot be altered or corrupted ; because nothing of this can comport with the Nature of an independent, necessary *Being*, which preceded all others ; also for the same Reason it could not have an *Exemplary* or an *Ideal Cause* ; nor lastly could it have a *Final Cause*, distinct from it self, because this would have proceeded from some *Efficient*, in whose Mind it must have existed : But since it appears to have had no *Efficient Cause*, by consequence it had no *Final* ; so that being absolutely independent, and subsisting by it self, it can neither be, nor act for any other but it self, because *the Action*, according to that Rule in Philosophy, *follows the Essence*. Hence may we also conclude that it needs not the Assistance of any other *Being*, that it is the Sovereign Lord, the ultimate End, and the only Happiness both of it self and of all other things ;
that

the Christian Religion. 55

that it is the first Source of every Degree of Life, Goodness, Reason and Wisdom; that it is infinitely above all other *Beings*, and unconceivably perfect; that in a word, it is the *one*, most Great and Good God, the *Author*, the *Governor* and *Director* of the World; the *Monarch* that reigns over all things, which either are or can be, and that with a far greater Sway and Prerogative than the *Sun* does over luminous Bodies, *Fire* over hot Bodies, *Man* over Beasts, or a *King* over his Subjects.

Without this *first Mover*, which is as it were an Intelligence or Soul to the Machine of the World, which actuates all the Springs, and directs all the Wheels of this vast *Automaton*, every Degree of Natural Motion would cease; the Inclinations and Aversions, the Pursuits and Flights of so many different *Beings* would be suspended: I say of so many different *Beings*, which fastned together like so many Wheels do either draw and unite by a kind of *Sympathy*, or push and jostle each other by a kind of *Antipathy*; of so many *Beings*, which having a seeming Enmity at each other, and yet a real Amity, do by this most harmonious *Discord* conspire to the Support and Perfection of the *Universe*.

The Knowledg of this *first Principle* is so natural and self-evident, that it has been universal in all Times and Places: this is a

Light which ever shines, to the Eyes not only of the Wise and Learned, but also of the Ignorant and Unlearned. For those Men who deny a *God* are *Monsters* rarely to be found, or rather, properly speaking, there are no real *Atheists* at all ; they, who pretend to be such, do only make an Appearance of it, and that upon no other ground, but that they may have some Colour for allowing those Disorders, and living in those Sins which the Belief of a *God* disallows and forbids. Whence we find that these profess'd Enemies of the *Deity* do often own his Being, even against their Will, and before they are aware of it ; in pressing Necessities and upon sudden Accidents, they cannot forbear imploring his Assistance, whom they outwardly declare that they do not *know*.

Thus all the false Reasonings of *Liber- tines*, tho they may indeed raise some Doubts about *Providence* and the other Perfections of *God*, yet can they not absolutely disprove his Existence ; tho they may somewhat weaken and obscure, yet can they not entirely destroy or efface the Knowledge of a *first Being* : so firmly is this rooted in the Minds of Men.

Now can it be thought that the *Consent* of all People, which is as it were the * Voice of

* Consensus omnium Naturæ Vox est. Cic. 1. Tusc. Quæst.

Nature,

Nature, is not built on a real Foundation? Surely if this rational Instinct, this natural Sentiment be false, it follows, that the *Light*, which ought to guide, does only misguide us; and that *Reason* it self throws us into the most enormous Error, by making us believe that there is a *God*: nay in case the universal Opinion of Men, touching the *Deity*, were not true, it would be the chief and most important of all the *Sciences*, to know that there is no *God*. Nothing would so highly concern us, as to undeceive our selves, touching the Belief of a *God*, that unlucky Error, that downright Imposture! But how can *Atheism* be a Truth, seeing it is the Source of all Enormities and Crimes? And how can the *Belief* of a *God* be an Error, seeing it is the Principle of all Moral Vertues, the Foundation of Government, and the Bond of Human Society? Because, in short, if we take away *God* out of the World, we at once take away, as the *Heathens* * have own'd, Sincerity, Humanity and Justice: And then withal I say, that no other Natural *Truths* could possibly be, or be distinguish'd from Error and Falshood, as some *Authors* have subtly and solidly prov'd.

* *Fidem & Societatem de Genere Humano, & unâ excellentissimam Virtutem, Justitiam auferre necesse est. Cic. de Nar. Deor.*

But

But to say no more of *God's* Existence, it also follows from the aforesaid Principles, that *God* is not a material Being or a *Body*. No Person of Sense can doubt, that there are, or at least may be certain Substances, disengag'd from *Matter*; and that these, according to the *Formal* Notion of 'em, are more perfect than Bodily Substances: wherefore *God* must needs be rather of the first than of the second Order, otherwise he would not be a most perfect Being, nor able to produce *Finite Spirits*, it being impossible for him to give that which he has not. Again I add, that neither can *God* be compounded of a *Body* animated by a *Spirit*, nor of a *Spirit* that animates a *Body*, both for the Reasons already mention'd, and because that, which has a Being in it self, is more noble than that which has its Being in or from another; and also because it being impossible that what is in *God* should be different from his own *Essence*, it is at once impossible, that he who is *himself* most perfect should be an animated *Body*. To this I add, that if *God* were thus vested with a *Body*, the *whole* of him would be more perfect than the *parts*; and so being made up of *parts* more or less perfect than each other, and admitting of Degrees, it would follow that he could not be in himself at once *Supremely* perfect. In short, every *Compound* must be suppos'd to have its Existence after the

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the Parts which compound it, and so in some sense it must depend upon 'em; or rather it results from a Cause which unites together different and opposite parts, such as are *Spirit* and *Body*. Whence it follows, that if God were a *Compound*, as he must be, were he an animated *Body*, he would not be independent, nor the first Principle, Cause, and Being.

CHAP. II.

The several Parts of the World prove that there is a God, that God is a pure Spirit, and that his Providence is over his Works.

HE that reflects but never so little on the Reasons which demonstrate that there is a most pure and infinitely perfect Being, can't without Horror and Indignation behold the Extravagance of those, who have endeavour'd to extinguish such a shining Light, and to falsify so evident a Truth. And here the worst on't is, that these imprudent, senseless Men, have gone upon that very Topic to disprove the Knowledge of God, which ought by right to have most clearly prov'd it. I mean the Beauty of so many

many *Creatures*, which have undoubtedly sprung from his *Goodness* and *Power*, together with the Establishment, the Order and the Government of the Universe in general.

The Libertine would fair hide under the *Veil* of *Nature*, even him who produces and governs it, albeit *Nature* it self was made for this very purpose, to manifest the Power and Majesty of its Author. Others less impious it may be, but not less ignorant than the Libertine or Atheist, plunge God in *Matter*, and tie him either to several *Bodys* of an immense Bulk, or to a single one, which they fancy to be the most noble and excellent; they ascribe to him Faults, Passions, and all the Infirmities incident to Men, so that in the same Breath that they pretend to own, they do indeed disown a God. But how absurd is it not to acknowledg God, but only under such a Form as is unworthy of him; and that upon no other ground, but merely because he has given to us so many Forms or Images of his *Essence*? Shall the Magnificence of his Gifts expose him to our Scorn? and shall the prodigious Variety of *Creatures* which he made out of *nothing*, to convince our Mind of the Obedience we owe him, serve only to make us revolt, and supply us with Arms to combat and oppose him*?

* Tanq. 2. Abns Deus Noticiam suam armavit. Terent.

Let us but hear what the *World* declares of God, and see how stupid we should shew our selves, by endeavouring to falsify the Testimonys which he gives us in it. First let us see of how many several *parts* it consists, and how these *parts* are at once both contrary and agreeable; both *Enemys* and *Friends*.

Let us view the immense *Extension* of the *Heavens*, the innumerable *Multitude* of *Stars*, the rapid *Motions*, the regular *Courses*, the exact *Proportions*, and various *Aspects* of the *Planets*; let us run over those vast *Globes* of *Light*, and seriously consider that tho there be such *Intervals* between 'em as do separate their *Heavens*, yet still they are conjoin'd, and in a manner link'd together; let us observe that all these *Stars* have different *Ends*, that these *Ends* are subordinate, and all of 'em terminate in one, which is the *Perfection* of the *Universe*. In short, let us reflect on their most harmonious *Discords*, their constant *Changes*, their just *Combinations*, and orderly *Revolutions*; and then let us say, whether all these things which the *Mind* of *Man* can so hardly conceive, could be thus concerted by any other Cause, than a *Divine Understanding*, than a Principle which is *Unity* and *Wisdom* it self? For it can't be suppos'd that several *Intelligences* or *Minds* could contrive and work this Effect, nor that so uniform, so regular a Government,

vernment, could arise from a Variety of Principles; nor can it be imagin'd, that the Correspondence and Relation of these several Principles to each other, is the sole Cause of this Peace and Uniformity; for who does not know that *Multitude* depends on *Unity*, and not *Unity* on *Multitude*? That Concord is only a contingent *Unity*, that *one* is of it self, and by its nature the Cause of *one*, and of *many*; but that *many* cannot, unless by Accident, become the Cause of *one*.

Moreover, to take from God the Quality of *Sovereign*, by setting up with him an *Equal*, would be plainly to *ungod* him and to destroy his *Deity*. Either there is but one God, or there is none at all; it is a Sentiment full as unworthy of *God*, to believe him to be that which he is not, or which his infinite Perfection supposes that he cannot be, as not to believe him to be at all*.

But let us take yet a nearer View of those things which fall under our Senses, the constant Influences shed upon us by the *Stars*, the Treasures of Light distributed by the *Heavens*, the Vicissitudes of Day and Night, Heat and Cold. Let us consider the Swiftness and Regularity with which the *Sun*, or it may be the *Earth*, performs his Course, to-

* Deus si non unus est, non est quia dignis credimus non esse, quodcunque non ita fuerit, ut esse debebit. *Tertul. contr. Marc. Lib. 1. C. 3.*

gether with the wonderful Effects which he produces. Tho he be fix'd to his own proper *Globe*, yet is he at once diffus'd over all the *World* *, and spreads as many Benefits as Beams; he is the Dispenser of the Favours of *Heaven*, and the Super-intendant of the Productions of the *Earth*; he cherishes the *Animals* and *Plants*, presides over the *Elements*, and holds the chief Rank among the *Planets*; he is the Eye of the *World*, and the Heart of *Nature*.

All this, and much more may be said of the *Sun*, if we regard him as the Minister and Instrument of *God*: And to this may be added, what the *Roman Orator* said of him, that *his Light alone darkens all the Expressions of Eloquence, and that our Tongues are as unable to speak for him, as our Eyes to look on him*. But if from a *Servant* we would make him a *Master*, from an *Instrument* an *Artist*, and from a *Creature* a *God*; what will this fine *Star* be with all his Splendors and Beautys, but only a horrid *Monster*? What will this *Giant* be with all his *Courses*, but as it were an *Infant* or *Pygmy*? Shall *God* be shut up in a limited Space, and have but a finite Vertue, like the *Sun*? Shall he, like that *Star*, extend his chief Influence and Heat only to those who live under the *Æqua-*

* Minut. Fel. in. Octav.

tor, and in the *Temperate Zones*? Shall he be thought not to have Force enough to melt the Ices of the *Polar Regions*, and to free those, who inhabit the utmost parts of the *Globe* from the Rigors of Cold? Shall his Beams have no Influence those ways, where they fall but obliquely? And shall they not be able to dissipate those Vapors, which they exhale, where they come vertically and directly? Is not this a plain Token of the Providence of God, that while this Sovereign *Monarch*, as jealous of his own Glory, limits the Power of his Minister, lest the *Servant* should be taken for the *Master*; he at the same time waters with constant Rains the *Countrys* lying in the *Torrid Zone*, lest they should be consum'd by those excessive Heats, which burn and scorch 'em? But if the *Sun* be not *God*, or if *God* be not in the *Sun*, as the *Soul* in a *Body*, I think we may as safely conclude, that neither is he shut in any other *Celestial Globe*, much less in any of the *Sublunary Bodys*, the baseness of these gross and corruptible things being wholly disproportionate to the Grandeur of a pure and immortal *Being*. How much rather ought we to acknowledg *God*, as he is without Composition, without Mixture, present in all the *Parts* of the *World*, by his *Essence*, *Power* and *Immensity*, creating, preserving, ruling, giving to each *Creature* a *Power* of acting and co-operating with the *whole*, after a
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divine and noble way? Why should we couple him with *Matter*, and fancy that with it he is an Ingredient in the Compound of the *World*? Why should we make him subject to Inconstancy, and plunge him in the basest Impuritys, by confounding his Spiritual Essence with corruptible, mortal Bodys? Are we so unreasonable as to deny that God exists in the *Universe* after such a manner, as *Reason* tells us that he must needs do, because this is glorious and worthy of him; and to affirm that he exists quite otherwise, because this is ignominious, and unworthy of him? Who can imagin that the Statue of a great *Monarch*, supposing it to be made by never so excellent an *Artist*, yet can so expresse the Majesty, the Air, and all the Qualitys of the Prince, as that his *Subjects* cannot know it from him, or else must needs fall into this Fancv, that he informs it as a Soul does a Body? No Man certainly can think so, unless he himself be as stupid as a *Statue*.

For in short, tho this Statue may have some true Lines of the *Monarch's* Visage, and some outward Resemblance of his Person, yet will it fail of his Action, his Vertues and Power. If a *Looking-Glass* be in your View, not in a Line of Direction, or opposite against you, then you'll see nothing but the *Glass*, or only the Surface of it, and not any Image represented in it; but if you cast

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your Eye directly towards it, you presently think it a Portraiture, or Copy of some Original, which you find to be represented in it. Now do but consider the World as a *Looking-Glass, Picture or Statue*, which contains a Similitude of the Creator, regard it with reference to the same Design for which it was first made, and you'll find it to be most beautiful and perfect. But if you'd make it a Part of your God, or your God a part of it, you'll deprive it of all its Beauty and Perfection; it would presently become most vile and contemptible, like as a *Looking-Glass, Picture or Statue*, if esteem'd as compleat as the *Prince* it represents, or brought in competition with him. And if, as a * Father of the Church declares, *the Beauty of all that is beautiful, the Goodness of all that is good, the Existence of all that exists, do consist in an Imitation of the Deity; also if Beauty be but Deformity, Good but Evil, and Being Nothing, when compar'd with God: What shall we say to, not a bare Comparison, but a Competition and Equality, that would raise the Creature to the Throne of the Creator, poor despicable Worms to the Divine Majesty?*

* Cujus imitatione pulchra sunt quaecunque pulchra, bona sunt quaecunque bona, sunt quaecunque sunt. Cui comparata, nec pulchra sunt, nec bona sunt, nec sunt. S. August.

But if you are so charm'd with the Beauty of this World, as to think it a God, consider with your selves that its principal Beauty consists in the Order and Disposition of all its Parts, in the Relation it has to its *End*, and much more in the Art and Contrivance with which it was form'd, than if it be absolutely, and in it self regarded. This point will deserve our Consideration, to the end that we may with Admiration behold the Contriver and Maker of *Nature*. Thus will all things in the *World*, great and small, precious and base, high and low, lead you directly to their *Author*, and will not in the least misguide you, by giving you too mean an *Idea* of the Creator, or too noble a one of the Creature.

On the one hand you'll find, that the smallest and the most abject *Beings* are fram'd with a wonderful Artifice and Design; that even those which seem to be imperfect and irregular, are most compleat and curious Works of *Nature*. On the other you'll find, that the seemingly finest and most perfect *Creatures* have notwithstanding such Defects, as do counterballance their Beauty and Perfection. The one are like those excellent *Draughts*, which represent only Beasts and Shepherds Cottages; the others are like unto well-shap'd Bodys, which yet have some natural Flaw or Imperfection which pleases not the Sight; so that neither of 'em can in

any wise enter into a Comparison or Competition with a supreme and infinitely perfect *Majesty*; at the most they can only give us some Notion of it, it being their End to manifest the Glory, not of the *Artifice*, but the *Artist*.

Wherefore the *Creator*, to let the World see that none of the *Creatures* can pretend to Divinity, and that all things were made to shew that there is a *God* above them, saying in their Language, *It is he that hath made us, and not we our selves*: The *Creator*, I say, in framing the Heavens, adorn'd 'em with a multitude of Stars, enrich'd 'em with a Treasure of Light, and also an Extension and Motion, which renders 'em Objects of Wonder and Amazement. But withal he made 'em inanimate; so far was he from raising 'em to the Dignity of rational Substances, that he refus'd 'em what he granted even to the vilest Insects. He did not think fit that their *Periodical* and *Synodical* Revolutions should always fall back in the self-same point, so as that exact, certain and invariable Figures of their Progressions and Returns might be contriv'd. He has not appointed precise Limits to the Course of the *Sun*, and would have this Star pass thro the twelve Signs of the *Zodiack* with a kind of Inequality; so that in a Tract of Time some Years are found to have more Days than others, and the *Equinoxes* and *Solstices* are

are not exactly at the same Periods that they were at in former times.

He ordain'd that in a course of Generations, the Stars should change their Situation and their Place. He has left to our Discovery many dark Bodys, which move about the *Sun*, and are very near to it, as plainly appears by Observations, which are daily made by Mathematicians, with the newly invented *Perspectives*. Also by the help of these Instruments we find that *Venus* increases and decreases like the *Moon*, that *Mars* has certain Spots and Clouds about him, that the Parts of the *Lunar* Globe are not homogeneous, and that it has Eminencys and Risings greater than the Mountains of our *Earth*. Not to mention those new Stars seen in *Cassiopea* and *Cygnus*, and several others discovered in our Age; as also those Comets which are own'd to be above the highest Region of the Air, and thereby visibly prove that the Heavenly Bodys are not exempted from the Corruptions of the Sublunary.

Also is not the *Earth*, which is the Habitation of Man, and continually receives the Favours, or rather the Tributes of Heaven; is it not, I say, contemptibly small, nay is it not the Sink and Drain of the Universe? And is not *Man*, who enjoys so noble a Being, and is reckon'd so considerable among the Creatures; is not he, I say, encumber'd

with various Infirmitys, both in his Soul and Body? But on the other hand, let us see what is noble and fine in those other *Creatures*, which appear at first blush so irregular and monstrous, so useless and deform'd, when we do not thoroughly consider the end for which they were design'd. *Floods* and *Earthquakes* which overturn and swallow up *Cities*, *Plagues* which depopulate *Kingdoms* and *Provinces*, many other *Accidents* and extraordinary *Symptoms*, which seem to threaten Nature with an Universal *Ruin*, are manifest *Proofs* of a Divine *Providence*, without which the World would have long since perish'd, and could not now endure for a moment. A *Vessel* that leaks all about must needs quickly sink, excepting the *Holes* be immediately stop'd; a *Ship* abandon'd to the *Mercy* of the *Winds*, and having no *Pilot* to steer it, cannot go far without being wrack'd; an *House* whose *Walls* begin to cleave asunder, or its *Beams* and *Rafters* to rot, will suddenly fall, unless carefully repair'd; and a *Commonwealth* made up of various *Humours*, and rended into such opposite *Factions*, as that the one cannot possibly stand unless the other fall, will not subsist long, but must needs be dissolv'd into *Ruin* and *Confusion*, unless a Superior *Wisdom* maintain a general *Concord* in those particular *Discords*, and compensate the *Loss* of single *Members* by some *Advantages* of the whole *Body*.

Who

Who could put a stop to the Course of those *Flames*, which rise from the bottom of Subterraneous Caverns to the Tops of Mountains? who could hinder the *Sea* from passing its Bounds, or oppose the Usurpations it sometimes makes upon the Land, unless the same Almighty Hand which first created *Fire* and *Water*, were still careful to restrain their Violence? By what Hazard, what unexpected Juncture, could the Effects of these terrible Events be suspended or limited, were there not a Sovereign Power in the World, which makes it self to be obey'd by the most rebellious *Creatures*, and whose Laws, even those that are written on the *Sand*, are most inviolably kept? How could the World subsist under so many violent Motions, did not *Omnipotence* so moderate the Force of 'em, as to make 'em less strong than the *Machine* they move?

What Vertue is it that cleanses those Cities, which have been once tainted with a *Plague*? Who is it that corrects the Insalubrity of the *Air*, after it has been universally corrupted? Who is it that after a general *Mortality* so seasonably restores a general *Healthiness*, as to make this Scourge of the Divine Justice, instead of destroying, seem only to purge and to cleanse Mankind, by taking from it all that is superfluous and useless? How could any just or stable Order of things be kept up amidst these apparent

Disorders, were it not establish'd by that most wise *Intelligence*, which found out the Secret of giving Generation and Birth to things, by their Corruption and Death? I say, by that Divine *Intelligence*, which is as plainly seen in the Darknes of the Night as in the Clearness of the Day, which makes use of Eclipses and Shadows, that cover the *Stars*, to dissipate the Clouds of our *Ignorance*, and to make his own Wisdom appear with a brighter Lustre? Some Creatures seem indeed useless, nay hurtful; yet the Industry and Artifice of the supreme *Artist* is more visible in them than in others. What a most useful thing is *Fire*? What Shift could we possibly make without it? Yet what is more furious and raging when it catches any Fuel proper for it to feed on, and what mighty Disorders must it needs cause, did not God as it were chain it up, and make it be a Servant to our Uses?

What are *Poisons* but exquisite Confections or Compositions, where the ingredient Qualities meet in the most intense degree? Are they not excellent Antidotes? Do they not serve for the Comfort of Men, and the Perfection of the *World*? Are they not much the same in the general Harmony of the Creatures, with high or low Voices, Trebles or Bases in a Consort of *Musick*?

The like may be seen by any considerate Person in all other things, however they may

may at first seem useless or hurtful, not excepting even the little *Gnats*, which are so very necessary for cleansing the Air, in Places where they abound, and which are most subject to Putrefactions. The most cruel and savage *Creatures* by making War against the other *Beasts*, do second the Intention of God; while they use all their Efforts to destroy a whole *Species*, they at once declare the watchful Eye of an universal *Providence*, which defends and preserves the weaker things from such very potent Enemies; of a *Providence*, I say, which has so well suted the Weapons of the strongest to those of the weakest, that the latter have subsisted for so many Ages, notwithstanding the Injuries they constantly sustain: they stand their Ground at least, altho they don't resist; and albeit they can't hinder their *Enemy* from conquering, yet do they hinder themselves from perishing in so unequal a Combat.

The Creator was pleas'd that *Roses* should grow among Prickles; that *Fruits* should be cloth'd with Rinds, and frequently arm'd with Points and Thorns; that the *Elements* should have in 'em contrary Qualities, and make against each other a perpetual War. In a word, he thought fit, as I said before, that some Imperfections in the *Creatures* should fitly adapt the things made to the Idea and Design of the *Maker*.

But

But if Man be so stupid as not only to fancy something of Divinity, but also to seek his Happiness in imperfect, wretched *Creatures*, what would he have done had God made 'em more proper to suffice our Desires, and more like unto that infinite Object, which we may indeed hope to enjoy, but cannot sensibly describe? But in a word, these limited Perfections, these seeming Defects, these Disorders and Irregularities of the *World*, do rather afford us occasion to acknowledg and glorify the *Providence* of God, which not only declares that all the *Creatures* are too imperfect to deserve to be worship'd as *Deitys*, but also amidst their Imperfections obliges 'em to confess as it were with their own Mouths one infinitely perfect *Deity*; a *Deity* that would not have Man fix on *them*, as the Objects of his Love and Admiration; but that from *them* he should pass on to the Love and Esteem of his only true God. But now let us consider the other Master-Pieces of this wonderful *Artificer*, and transiently see how well the seemingly rudest and vilest things are proportioned to the *End* for which they were made. Who can but take notice, that even the *insensitive* Beings are perfected and preserv'd by tending to their *Center*, by being assembl'd and join'd to each other, and a thousand other ways; that like well dispos'd Citizens they seasonably and orderly sacrifice them-

themselves for the general good of the *Universe*?

Who does not observe that *Vegetables* suck in that Moisture which is proper for their Nourishment, but reject that which is hurtful or superfluous? Who is it that taught the *Plants* how to grow and fasten in the Earth, by taking deep Roots for solid Foundations, according to the measure of their height? Who made such a plenteous Variety of *Fruit Trees*? who understood how to draw from a little Dirt that gives 'em Nourishment, so many different Kinds, so many Tasts and Figures? What Hand was it that cloth'd the *Fruits* with Leaves, with hard and prickly Rinds, or else with only a delicate Skin to preserve 'em from the Injuries of the Weather? What Master instructed the *Ant*, the *Silk-worm*, the *Bee*, and various other Animals, great and small, in the Rules of self-Preservation, and of being useful to the Benefit of *Man*?

Now if these *Creatures* do not fail of attaining their end, if they so faithfully serve the great Common-wealth of the *World*, albeit the one of 'em have no Soul at all, the others no Sense, and neither of 'em Reason: Can it be deny'd, that since they act like intelligent *Beings*, they are assisted by a superior Intelligence, and rul'd by a Sovereign *Wisdom*? If an ignorant Rustick that never learnt to write, should yet chance to draw a
correct

correct Piece of *Writing*, with all the Letters of it form'd, according to the Rules of *Art*, should we not conclude that some expert Master had guided his Hand? But if any one be so unreasonable as to attribute *Reason*, not only to Beasts, but also to Plants and Stones, rather than a Divine *Understanding* to the World, let him consult himself, who has the Facultys of *Reason* and *Sense* for the Conduct of his Actions; and let him see whether 'tis he himself that orders the Digestion of the *Meat* he receives, the Distribution of the *Chyle*, the Formation of the *Blood*, the Production of the *Spirits*, the Nutrition and Augmentation of the *Body*, and all the Operations of the natural *Facultys*. If then, as he must needs do, he find that all these Actions are perform'd in us that are *rational*, without our Knowledg, nay are then for the most part best of all perform'd, when we are asleep and do not use our *Reason*; what may we think of those gross material Substances, which are utterly incapable of *Reasoning*? Surely we cannot but admit of an uncreated, original *Reason*, which existing and acting every where, disposes and governs all things, and supplys the Powers of *Sense* and *Understanding* to those which naturally want 'em.

How can it be thought that he is either ty'd to one single Body, or mingl'd and blend-ed with the *matter* of several; that a Sub-stance

stance which so pervades, and inwardly penetrates Corporeal Substances, as that it sustains and disposes 'em outwardly, should be shut up in the *intima Natura*, or Essence of them, or made subject to the Functions of any determinate Form? How much rather must it be suppos'd to enjoy an entire Freedom, and a general uncontroll'd Understanding, in order to determine each *Nature* to its proper Actions? But because it will be seasonable to say somewhat more of what God has done for this end, let us briefly survey the innumerable Multitude of Sensitive *Substances*, which are upon the Earth, in the Water and the Air. What a wonderful variety, what strange Propertys and Proportions do we see! What Figures, Habits and natural Weapons, what Instincts, Dispositions, Actions and different Ends! How many Wonders are there compris'd in these few Words, and how many Volumes would it take up to describe 'em at large! Nay what *Mind* can comprehend, can duly value and explain 'em! What Art, what Industry or Reason was able to contrive and effect so vast, so ingenious a Work! Can it be doubted that the *Reason* which acts and orders all these things is superior to *all*, indifferent to *all*, and exempted from the Impurity of the *Creatures*, to the end that it may suffer nothing to be spoil'd for want of due Supplies; or rather that it may perfect the several parts of the

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the *Universe*, whose Natures are in themselves so very disproportionate to what we see 'em perform? Was it not requisite that *Light* should it self be void of Colour, that it may receive all sorts of Colours? And is it not because it is not colour'd, that passing thro' blew, green, or red Glass, it imparts these Tinctures to the Bodys it enlightens?

But to say no more of these natural *Beings*, whose Curiousness, tho' so admirable, yet after all is but like a rich Embroidery upon a coarse Stuff; let us proceed to consider the rational *Soul*, whose Nature and Essence are so noble and excellent. How glorious is the *Will*, how sublime the *Understanding*! What Treasures might we discover in these two Facultys, were our Sight but so piercing and strong as that we could steddily and thoroughly behold 'em! But so far are we from having a thorough View of these Powers, that we have hardly a just Discernment even of the *Memory*. In general, we may behold its vast Capacity and Extent, in it may we find the *Celestial Spheres* with all the Stars, the *Seas* with their infinite multitude of Sands, enough even to fill an immense and boundless Space; the *Qualitys*, Differences and Postures of *things*; the *particular* Beings which really exist, and the *universal* which are only in the Mind and the Soul that forms 'em. What innumerable *Species* and Notions are dispos'd and plac'd in it, without

without interfering or mingling together? How regularly do they appear in that certain Order wherein they are called for, and when dismiss'd, how do they retire without the least Confusion unto their former Posts? Here do we find the Dimensions and Measures of *Bodys* without their Bulk, the Beauty of *Colours* without any Paint, nay without Light or any visible *Species*, the Difference of *Tastes* without Liquors, the Delicacy of *Smells* without Vapour, the Sweetness of *Harmony* without any Sound, the Delights of the *Senses* and Pleasures of the Body without actual Sensation, and the most cutting Pains without any Pain, nay sometimes with Pleasure.

In short, we may find in the *Memory* the Words of a long Discourse, so well rang'd and order'd as that the Connection of not one of 'em is broken; Syllogisms, Principles, Maxims, Conclusions, Sciences: In a word, all sensible and intelligible, all permanent and transient Beings are there engraven in so very natural, so lively Images, that they exactly resemble those Originals which had been once before us. What material Light or Stars can be compar'd to this marvellous *Faculty*? What Corporeal *Substance* can find out Instruments delicate enough to make so admirable, so exquisite a Work? Is not all this sufficient to convince us, that he who gave these Perfections to the *Soul* is

is himself a *Spirit*? For can we suppose that he gave to it that which he had not, or that the Effect is more noble than the Cause? Or can we be so stupid as to think that such wonderful things were the Effects of *Chance*? The Author of so monstrous an Opinion has been deservedly branded by *Antiquity* with a Mark of the greatest Folly; and for my part I am ashamed to enter the Lists with him, or to stand in opposing the *Deliriums* of so extravagant a Man.

Can *Chance* be supposed to have made the World by a clashing and jumbling of Atoms? Supposing that all the Letters requisite to make up *Homer's Iliad* were thrown down at random, would they at once accidentally form this Poem? It may be you'll tell me, that the *Foam* of a pictur'd Horse was much better pourtray'd by one casual, desperate Hit, than by a thousand Stroaks of the *Pencil*. But I'd know of you again, whether any choice and entire Pictures, such as the *Judgment* of *Michael Angelo*, or the *Constantine* of *Raphael*, were ever so made? Could Draughts of such a curious variety, with so many Figures, and the Designs of 'em so bold and noble, the Colours so sweet and lively, the Lines so natural, and all the Rules of *Optick* so exactly observ'd in 'em; I say, could such Draughts as these be the Works of *Chance*?

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Can you infer that those excellent Pieces of Art, which can never be sufficiently admir'd, might be the Effects of *Chance*, because a Confusion of Colours (supposing the Story to be true) did once upon a time represent the *Foam* of a Horse, albeit the Painter did not design it, nor think that his Despair would occasion that Effect? Will you maintain it as a certain Truth, that the World was *casually* form'd, because 'tis not impossible you'll say, that *Homer's Iliad* might once be form'd by Characters fortuitously shuck and thrown down, tho perhaps this has never yet happen'd, nor may happen for Millions of Ages?

But tho this might happen at one time or other, yet are Hot and Cold, Dry and Moist, Air and Earth, Water and Fire, the Heavens and Light, the Sun, Stars and Elements, the Vegetative, Sensitive and Rational Soul, Spirits and Bodys; are these, I say, so well suited to each other, and so easy to be coupl'd together, as A to B, V to S, &c? Could all the Creatures, and the several parts of the *Universe* as easily convene and settle in that beautiful Order, wherein we behold 'em, as the Figures and *Letters* of those Words might be suppos'd to do in that Rencontre?

But if any are so unreasonable as not to be convinc'd by these Reasons, I shall produce such others, as I think cannot fail of con-

vincing and perswading 'em. Who has ever told 'em that what is term'd *Chance*, and which denotes an unexpected, undesigned Effect, and which, as such, depends not on any particular *Cause*, is a real thing with regard to some *universal Cause*? And who can entertain so senseless an Opinion, that what is produced in the World has not *real efficient Causes*? If any Man can bring me one Reason or Instance to prove that Fancy, I'll immediately be of his side, and venture to renounce what I daily experience, that all the Effects produc'd in Nature have *true Causes*, and are so far from being casual, that they are always ruled by a superior Law.

But to come yet closer to the matter in hand, I omit to speak of the ridiculous Eternity of those infinite *Atoms*, which *Epicurus* looks on as self-existent Principles. What? they are so imperfect, so blind and poor, that they have been forced as it were to grope for, and beg of each other all their Perfection for infinite Ages; or rather every particular *Atom* has been oblig'd to borrow its Perfection from an innumerable Multitude, this being to be found but only in one certain Combination and no other, in but one settling, and that not only contingent; but also, as the *Libertine Atomists* suppose, it has happened but once in a whole *Eternity*, so that for want of this Union those little *Bodys* have been for infinite Ages to the full as insignificant

cant as if they had never been at all; and when the present Union ceases, they must resume their former State, must relapse into a kind of *non-existence*, which according to them is the fruitful Source of all *Existence*.

Also I say nothing of the Chimerical *Motion* of those Atoms, nor of all those Turns and Returns, those Races and Revolutions which they are suppos'd to make; as if, tho' having neither Sense, Design nor Mover, they were nevertheless determin'd to *Motion*, rather than to *Rest*; and by their Motion made infinite, rather than some finite Combinations, or if I may so speak, repeated the same Hits *infinite* times. All this I pass by, and much more that might be said to this purpose, and only desire to know of my Opponents, how the Concourse of *Bodily* Atoms can make what is more subtle and fine than *Body*; I mean the *Intellectual* Degree of Being, which is far more noble and excellent than the Corporeal Nature, as being capable of receiving, not only its own Form, but also those of many other things, in the *Species* which serve to represent 'em. What relation has the Figure and Combination of these Corpuscles, to what is so remote from *Body* and *Matter*, to what is able to spiritualize in it self the most gross and bulky Objects?

Moreover, the *Intelligent* Nature does many things by the bare Rules of Art; and no

one can deny, but that whatever is done by Art is more excellent and certain than what is fortuitous or casual, I say, fortuitous or casual, either in the common way, or in that which these whimsical *Philosophers* suppose; since by the Rules of Art that may be done at very the first Hit, which according to them was not done till after infinite Ages and Combinations. How then is it possible for *Chance*, which they assert to be the only Author of the World, while uncapable of acting at all, or at most can be suppos'd to act but fortuitously; how I say, is it possible for it to produce those *Intellectual* Substances, which have invented those very Arts, whose Effects do abundantly exceed those of *Chance*, and so endue 'em with a Light and Power to execute that, which it self does not know and cannot do? This is contrary to that known Axiom, that *Nothing can give that which it has not.*

Can it be doubted, but that it is far nobler and better to act for some end, by subordinating and proportioning fit means for attaining it, which can agree to none but an *Intelligent* Substance; than to act without any end or design, without subordinating and proportioning means, as *Chance*, if it could act at all, must be suppos'd to do? How then can *Chance* produce the *Intellectual* Nature, and endue it with a Power of finding proper means for attaining some end, tho it self

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be at once unable to do this, unless it become what we understand by *Reason*, and cease to be what the ordinary Notion of it imports?

But methinks I blush to employ my Thoughts in opposing so vain, so ridiculous a Doctrine, which has not the least shew of a Demonstration, but only *Chimera's* and Whimsies to maintain it; which supposes every thing and proves nothing; which vexes and racks the Mind of Man to make it deny a *Deity*, and renounce the Knowledge of a Sovereign Good; in the defence of which, Man should rather suffer a thousand Tortures and Deaths. How much more rational in his Judgment was a *Philosopher* of another Sect, who tho he had been bred in the Darkness of *Paganism* too, yet acknowledg'd that *God is the Soul and Intellect of the World, that he is whatever we see, because his Wisdom and his Providence appear in all the Creatures; and whatever we do not see, because he suffers not himself to be indeed seen, and falls not under our Senses; that we cannot form a proper Idea of his Greatness, but by conceiving him greater than all; that he alone contains whatever is in the World, supporting within, and embracing without the Work that he has made** And that the Difference

* Quid est Deus? Mens Universi: Quid est Deus? Quod vides totum, & quod non vides totum. Sic demum magnitudo sua illi redditur, quia nihil majus excogitari potest. Si solus est omnia, opus suum & extra & intra tenet. Senec. *Quest. Nat. Lib. 1. Praef.*

*between the Divine Nature and the Human is, that in the Human Nature the Spirit is the better part; whereas in the Divine all is Spirit, all is Mind**. Yet says he, some Men are so stupid as to think that *Chance* effected this mighty Work, whose Beauty is unparallel'd, its Disposition so regular, and its Establishment so firm. To which purpose he goes on with Wonder and Amazement, that some should think themselves endu'd with a Mind that is able to provide for, and regulate not only their own Affairs, but also other Mens; and yet should at once fancy that this *World*, of which we and the other Creatures are Parts, has not an Intelligence or *Reason* to govern it; and that it is wholly rul'd by *Chance* or *Nature*, two very blind and heedless Guides.

From what I have said, as touching the Proofs of *God's* Existence, I draw this Conclusion, that a Substance which acts without it self, and withall of it self, which acts freely, and by consequence refers its Actions to some *End*, is more noble and excellent than those which act blindly and necessarily, either by the Impression and Impulse of others, or by the bare Motion and

* Quid ergo interest inter Naturam Dei & nostram? Nostri melior Pars Animus est; in illo nulla Pars extra Animum, totus Ratio. Senec. ibid.

Instigation of *Nature* *: as also the Operation of that which proposes an End is more universal and perfect, than the Actions of those things which do not determine themselves to any End, but are determin'd by some external Substance to particular Effects. Whence it follows that either the Action by which the *World* was made was voluntary and directed to an End, or that the particular Actions of some certain Parts of the *World* are more excellent than the general Action, which first produc'd the whole of it. But if this cannot be said, because it would suppose the thing contain'd to be greater than the thing containing, and the *Effect* to be more noble than the *Cause*: To avoid so gross an Absurdity it must be own'd, that the Universe is the Work of a *voluntary* Action, the Notion of which implies the having a design and a relation to an ultimate end; but withal that this Work could not be ordain'd and refer'd to its ultimate end, but by a first Principle and first efficient Cause; I say a *first*, for were there not a first, and a Progress in *Efficient Causes* might be in *infinitum*; then neither would there be any final Cause: but since the World must needs have had a final Cause, as I have already shewn, it also must have had a first Principle and first

* See Tho. Aquin. con. Gent. L. 2. C. 23. L. 23. Cap. 1.

Efficient Cause; and it is plain that the World cannot be refer'd to an *ultimate end*, but by a first Principle. For no other Cause but the first could assign it a last end, it being evident that all the Causes, excepting only the first, would upon this supposition be preceded by some other, and so whatever Cause should assign a last end, would thereby intrench upon the Right of that which preceded it; and there could no Reason be given why this latter Cause rather than a former should have Power to prescribe an end to the *World*. On the contrary, as 'twould certainly be more proper for the Cause that preceded to have this Privilege above that which follow'd; and according to this supposition there would be no Cause at all, but what had another preceding it; so consequently would there be none but what a precedent Cause would exclude from that Prerogative, and so being unable to assign it, the World would have no *End* or final Cause at all. But if there be a last *End* or final Cause in the World, beyond which we can make no further search; there must needs also be a first Cause, before which there could be no other, and a first Principle, which is *God*.

Wherefore there is a *God*, who cannot forget the Works of his Hands, and whose End and Design without his Preservation and Support of things would be to no purpose; by consequence he does not abandon the

the Government of 'em, which is absolutely needful, not only for their Subsistence, but likewise for the Direction of 'em to that End, for which he made 'em. What Workman ever neglected his own Work? And how can a restif Idleness, unworthy of the most imperfect Creature, comport with the Deity, in reference to the World, which still no less depends upon his Power than it did at first, when made out of nothing?

'Tis the singular Property of God to work and not be weary, but therein to enjoy a Delight and Tranquillity, which none can molest or take from him. The Almighty Hand, which was not tir'd in rearing the great Machine of the Universe, undergoes as little Pains, nay none at all in ruling and preserving it. Most of those Proofs I have hitherto urg'd do serve to evince this Truth; for even the natural Dispositions and the Instincts of the smallest Creatures, in order to their proper Actions, the Peace and Concord they maintain, even in their constant Wars and Discords, those many Preservatives and Succours which keep 'em every moment from perishing, are most convincing Proofs of a Divine Providence which rules the World.

This great Body is, as I have hinted, subject to strange Distempers and Alterations, so that it must needs have been long ago ruined had not the Almighty Physician apply'd fit Remedys

dys to all its Diseases. But now if the Providence of God does so far concern it self, in preserving the insensitive and irrational Creatures, which are in the World like a sort of Mob, and the lowest Populacy, or rather as Slaves and Vassals, born only for Chains and Subjection; how much more does he take care of *rational* Substances, those Master-pieces of the Universe, and for whose Service all other things were made? Is it at all probable that the Sovereign *Master* should neglect a Creature, which is alone able to glorify and serve him, or that without putting himself to any the least trouble, he cannot care for it and receive from it a due and lawful Homage? Wherefore it must be own'd, that the *Providence* of God is as absolutely necessary as his Existence, Wisdom, Goodness and infinite Perfection.

for every the natural Disposition, in order to their proper Actions, the Peace and Concord they maintain, even in their constant Wars and Disorders, those many Preva-

nces and Disorders which keep on every moment from perishing, are most convincing Proofs of a Divine Providence which rules

the World.

CHAP. P. I have hinted, I must needs have been long ago minded had to strange Disasters and Alterations, to that not the Almighty Physician apply'd his Remedy

CHAP. III.

*That there must needs be one true Religion,
and that Men are capable of knowing it.*

IF there be a God who is infinitely perfect, and endu'd with a Sovereign Providence, by which he rules the World, and guides it to an end by futable means; I do not see what other this end can be, but his own Glory and the Communication of his Goodness, which relate to, and terminate in himself as their End and Principle, even as the Lines of a Circle concenter in a Point. Now the most natural and most proper Method for God to be glorified, is for him to be acknowledg'd in the Works of his Hands, that is, to be prais'd, honour'd, thank'd, and serv'd by the *rational* Creatures; and thro the Mediation of *them*, by all the others, which are design'd and appointed either for their Benefit and Entertainment, or to give 'em an occasion to consider and admire the Works of the Creator. To which I add, that God cannot satisfy his own Goodness, by imparting and expanding himself for the Uses of *Men*, unless he crown 'em with their proper and Sovereign Happiness.

Now

Now as to the *Glory* of God, there would be need of Instructions and Rules for serving and praising him after such a way as is worthy of him; and as for the *Sovereign Happiness* of Men, there would be need of such Means as might make 'em in some sense deserve it, the Attainment of it being properly due to a sort of Merit. Now both of these Requisites are at once compris'd in *Religion*, and are no where else to be found: Wherefore it was necessary that this should be establish'd in the World, from the first Creation of it, if so be it always had some end, and the *Creator* cannot be suppos'd to have ever been without a Design and a Providence over his *Creatures*.

But now again, were this Religion either impossible to be *known*, or not only *one*, it would be still as inconvenient as if there were none at all. Wherefore, tho like the Day, it might perhaps have a dark Morning, and a somewhat clearer Noon; yet known it must be by one means or other: and Unity being essential to it, it could also be but one. As there is but one God, so can those *Creatures* who bear the same relation to him have but one Worship, and one way of serving him; the supreme and first *Unity* cannot be a Principle of so many different Religions, which condemn and destroy each other.

CHAP. IV.

Marks of the true Religion; that these Marks are found in none but the Christian.

HAVING shewn from the Acknowledgment of a *Providence* that there must needs be a true Religion, the Tendency of which is to glorify God; I think it proper in the next place to search for those Marks, by which this Religion may be discern'd from all others. In the doing of which we may observe this following method: That *Religion* which raises its Professors to what is most perfect, which is most conformable to the purest Lights of Reason, which teaches such Truths as in the main are not contrary to, tho perhaps *above* the reach of Human Understanding, and which so plainly proves these Truths to have been reveal'd by God, that after having us'd all necessary Diligence in searching 'em, they can't, without utterly renouncing Prudence, nay *Reason* it self, be call'd in question: That Religion, I say, is the only true one, and is what the *Providence* of God has pitch'd on and given to the World.

Now

Now none but the *Christian* Religion bears this Character ; whence we may most certainly infer that this and this only has been taught by God, and by consequence that this alone is true, and that therefore it ought to be heartily embrac'd. I'll endeavour to set the first and second Propositions in a due Light, after which the Conclusion will be plain and unquestionable.

C H A P. V.

That is the true Religion which conducts its Professors to what is most perfect, and whose Principles are conformable to the pure Light of Reason. The Christian Religion has this Advantage.

I Begin my Proof of this by shewing that we cannot embrace the true Religion, which the *Providence* of God has establish'd, unless we incline to what in all respects appears the surest side, and follow the purest Light of Reason, which indeed is so very plain that it seems to need no Proof. For in a word, God cannot but lead Men to what is most excellent, and unless he intends to deceive 'em, his Maxims cannot contradict each other. The Doctrine of a Teacher

equally

equally good and wise, that makes use of *Nature* and *Revelation* to instruct us, must have a consistent Foundation and coherent Principles*. If the necessity of a true Religion be grounded upon the Light of Nature, then must the true Religion needs be conformable to it, not only as to its main Substance and Foundation, but also its Consequences and Effects.

Besides, since the Knowledge of God is, as I said before, the Principle of all *moral* Vertues, and the Rule of all *Political* Government; and since by giving up himself to the Practice of Vice a Man becomes little better than a Beast; it follows that the true Religion, as containing in it the most perfect Knowledge of God, that can be attain'd in this Life, does withal carry in it what highly conduces to the Perfection and Improvement of the *reasonable Nature*. Let us now see whether the *Christian* Religion deserves this Character.

It is evident that the chief *Good* or Happiness of Man is for him to steer his Course toward a most lofty *End*, by lofty and suitable *Means*. Now is there, or can there be any more lofty end or means, and that is better proportion'd to the reasonable Nature, more conformable to the ingrafted Notions of the

* T. Aquin. cont. Gent. L. I. C. 7.

Mind; and in a word, more excellent than those which the *Christian* Religion proposes? The last *End* hereby aim'd at, is indeed so noble and sublime that bare Human Reason could never attain to a perfect Knowledge of it; yet withal this *End* does so well suit with our Natural Principles, that *Faith* no sooner discovers it to the Mind, but Reason immediately owns it to be that very *End*, which it before sought for, but of it self could never find.

For who does not see that the *Happiness*, which the most reasonable *Philosophers* propos'd, and plac'd in the Action of the noblest part of Man, about the noblest Object, perfectly possess'd and it self also perfect, cannot elsewhere be found than in the Knowledge of the *first Truth*, and in the Love of the *chiefest Good*; which is the very Doctrine of *Christ* and his *Apostles*? But still it must be own'd that this *Happiness* was to those *Philosophers*, like an unknown Land, which they rather pointed at than made a full Discovery of, and that not only because it can't be attain'd in this Life, but also because *Philosophy* and unassisted *Reason* cannot give an exact and certain account of the other Life. Yet the Light of Nature does indeed shew, that whosoever thinks to find this *Happiness* any other way, or in any other Object, will throw himself into the greatest Difficultys, and will be forc'd to own, that either Man

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has no Happiness at all in his View, or at least none other than that, which the *Christian Religion* proposes.

But still this Religion which ought to guide would indeed misguide us, unless it not only directed us to a most noble *End*, but did that withal by most proportionate *Means*, which can be no other than a most holy and perfect Life; and what Life is more holy and perfect than the *Christian*? Is not the *Sensitive* Life more perfect than the *Vegetative*; and on t^other hand, is it not less perfect than the *Rational*? Can it be doubted that a Life conformable to *Reason* and contradictory to *Sense*, is so much more excellent, as Man is above the Condition of Beasts; and as it comes nearer to the Life of God, who is a pure Spirit, the first Principle and ultimate End of all things?

Where can we find such very clear Lights, such powerful Motives to comply with the Dictates of Reason, as those which the Gospel affords us? *Christianity* bears upon its Frontispiece this grand Principle of *Nature*; That *we should do by others, as we would that they should do by us*. It makes not the least allowance contrary to the Laws and Rules of *Nature*, but rather it condemns the very lightest Faults, even those that were scarcely ever noted for such by any other *Religion* or Sect of the *Philosophers*. It promises great Rewards to Vertue, and threatens great Punish-

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ments to Vice; it strongly incites us to the one, and as strongly deters us from the other, endeavouring to take from it all the least Motives and Occasions. It strictly enjoins *Continence*, and thereby prevents very many Divisions, Disorders and Troubles. It commends the Contempt of Riches, Pleasures, Poms and Earthly Greatness. It forbids vain Glory and Pride, enjoins us to search for the *Knowledg of our selves*, by which it hinders a multitude of Jealousys, Quarrels and Strifes. In short, it chases away all manner of Vice, with the Evils that inseparably attend it, and introduces all manner of Vertue, with the Goods which it necessarily brings along with it.

Nor does *Christianity* barely tend to ruine Vice and to establish Vertue, but moreover it advances the latter to an *Heroick* or most perfect Degree; whereas it not only stifles the former in its Birth, and thereby stops its Course, but likewise prevents all Thoughts or Designs, and bars all *Inclinations* to it. It does not satisfy the *Christian Law*, that we forbear to take from others what of Right belongs to 'em; but moreover, in order to this, we must sometimes despoil our selves even of our own Goods, and be contented in a State of Poverty and Want, " whenever the Providence of God, or the " Terms of the Gospel do place us in, or call " us to it; especially considering that hereby

" we

“ we are disengag’d from those Troubles and
 “ Perplexitys, which might be apt to stop us
 “ in the way to *Vertue*. Again, *Christianity*
 enjoins us to love all Men as our *Brethren*,
 and to have no less tenderness for *them* than
 for our selves. It inspires us with these
 Principles of Charity, by discovering to us
 the extreme *Goodness* and rigorous *Justice* of
 God, who will graciously recompense all the
 good Offices which we do to others, but
 will severely punish our neglect of relieving
 and helping ’em in Miserys. It not only for-
 bids all Injurys and Abuses of our *Neighbour*,
 but also obliges them who chance to suffer
 any, to pardon and forgive ’em. It would
 have us love even Enemies and Persecutors,
 and render to ’em Good for Evil: But still
 it preserves the Interest of the *Publick*, by
 committing Vengeance to the Hand of the
 Magistrate, and holding the Punishment of
 Crimes to be no less just and useful when in-
 flicted by publick Authority, than it is sinful
 and pernicious when done by private Persons.
 It not only forbids Polygamy, and sets bounds
 to *Marriage*, by assigning to it such a height
 of Purity as no other Religion ever knew;
 but also advises great Souls, Persons given
 “ up to holy Contemplations or Ecclesiastick
 “ Functions, to live single as the better of
 “ the two, and to lead an Angelical Life in
 “ corruptible Flesh.

Now if a Substance be so much more pure and more dispos'd for the Knowledge of God, by how much less it is mingl'd and concern'd with inferior things; is it not evident that all the Lectures of the *Philosophers*, touching this kind of Purity, are in no wise comparable to what we find in *Christianity*, where it is at once both taught and practis'd? Moreover, what Sect or Religion has ever had so perfect a Knowledge, or has form'd an Idea so worthy of God, as *Christianity* has done? This confesses him to be Eternal, and without Beginning as well as End; it owns him to be *One*, notwithstanding the Cavils of some in relation to the *Trinity*, of which I shall say more hereafter; it holds him to be most Simple and Uncompounded, to be altogether Immutable and above the Revolutions of Time, to be the supreme Goodness, Justice, Wisdom and Power; to contain in himself all possible Perfections, and to need no Addition to increase his Excellency; to have not any the least Defect, and to be far above the reach and comprehension of any created Sense, Imagination or Understanding; to be Omniscient, and to see all things that have been, are or can be; to be the very *Abstract* of Providence, Truth, Mercy, Greatness and Holiness; to be the first Principle and the last End of all Beings, the Spring of all Goods, and the supreme Good of Man. In a word, it holds him to be so great

great and good as that nothing can possibly surpass him in those Qualitys, insomuch that he has a just Right to command us that we love him *entirely, with all our Heart, with all our Strength, and with all our Soul*. Now what can be more suited and conformable than this to the Light of Nature and the soundest *Philosophy*? Are there any such eminent Heights of Purity and Goodness to be seen in the Writings of the ancient *Sages*, who had no other Guide but mere human *Reason*? Whatever of this nature occurs in *them* is exhibited with a far greater Lustre and Perfection in the Precepts and Maxims of *Christianity*: In those Precepts and Maxims I say, by which we are advanc'd to a Resemblance of the Godhead, become *Partakers of the Divine Nature*, and thus arrive at such a height of Perfection as *Philosophy* could never so much as imagine.

But because this kind of *Perfection* is of a superior Order, far above the natural and present State of Man, as also the Happiness which goes along with it, and with which it so well suits; it stands by Reason, that the *Means* which help us to attain the one and the other should also be of the same elevated Order, and that not only as to the Eminency of a *Doctrine* reveal'd from above, but also the supernatural Power of *Grace*, which this Divine Religion promises and communicates to us after so many different ways. Whence it

follows, that by how much more a Person partakes of its *Mysterys*, and observes the Precepts of its *Morality*, so much more holy and vertuous does he become ; but on the contrary, he is vicious and wicked, according as he neglects or disobey's 'em, of which we have too numerous Examples.

What other Religion could ever boast of so refin'd, so compleat a Vertue ? What *Heroes* ever generously sacrific'd their Lives for the Honour of their *Seet* without some Itch of vain Glory ? Where, unless within the Pale of *Christianity*, was there such a Sanctity ever to be found, not only so pure and exempt from Pride, but likewise so venerable, even to the Eyes of its Opposers, as that of St. *James the Less* was to the *Jews*, that of St. *Anthony* to the *Pagans*, that of poor *Francis* of *Assis* to a Prince of *Syria*, and that of *Francis Xavier* to all the People of the *East* ? What *Seet* of Philosophy with all its Doctrines has produc'd so many Vertues, and those in so lofty a degree, among such a vast Number of People in so many different Places, and during so many Ages, as we find that *Christianity* has done ? What Laws or Precepts could ever form a more holy and innocent Life ?

Now if a *Cause* derives its Glory from the Excellency of its *Effect*, and a Workman from the Perfection of his Workmanship, how can it be doubted but that *Man* when

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he thus perfects himself, does most glorify his Creator, and tend to his last *Happiness* in a way most conformable to Reason? In short, who does not see, that so heroick, so regular a Life is the Effect of Truth, not of Error and Imposture? Had Imposture any hand in a matter of this kind, who could sooner know and discover the Fraud than a true *Christian*, one who is freed from the Tyranny of the Passions, has an Heart disengag'd from Earthly things, a most regular Mind, and an upright Soul? not to single out here any Instances of those Christians, who have been noted for a signal Penetration, and a depth of Sense and Knowledg; of which I shall say more anon.

Is it not reasonable to suppose that God should much rather preserve from Error in a matter of this Importance, one that adores him with the greatest Submission, that serves him with the most fervent Zeal, and is ready to lay down his Life for *his* Glory; than one that either knows him not at all, or if he has some little knowledg of him, yet endeavours not to know him more perfectly, and much less to serve him; than one that shamefully gives up himself to all manner of Vice, or only makes a vain shew of false and merely apparent Vertues? If God takes no care of all this, what then becomes of his *Justice* and *Providence*, which cannot be deny'd unless we deny his Being?

'Tis impertinent to reply that the greatest part of *Christians* live quite contrary to the Maxims I have mention'd, because even this very thing demonstrates the Excellency of *Christianity*. In relation to any thing which may be nam'd, *Perfection* is not attainable by all, nor indeed the greatest part of Men, considering the miserable State, which by Nature we are in. According as Men deviate from the *Christian* Law they insensibly fall into Vice and Disorder; and provided they do not entirely renounce it, they draw very great Advantages from it, tho they do not compleatly embrace and follow it. To be convinc'd of this, we need but only cast an Eye upon the Form of *Political* Government in those Provinces where the *Christian* Religion flourishes; we need but examin a little how it has expell'd Barbarism, introduc'd Humanity, Observance of Laws, Sincerity of Contracts, Obedience of Princes, and Equity towards all Men; instead of Crueltys, Tyrannys and Violence, which have and do still reign in the Dominions of *Infidels*. Also let it be remember'd that this Divine Seed has kept Vertue and Strength, even in the most barren and ungrateful Lands; I mean among such Men, as after having first embrac'd *Christianity*, yet have not been willing to receive its Maxims as the *only* Rule of their Actions. But this will not seem strange if we do but a little consider the wonderful

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Agreement of its Precepts and most rigid Counsels, to the different Humors of Men, to the Rules of the various States of Human Society, to the unequal Qualities of great and small, wise and simple, uncommon and vulgar; and in a word, to Reason and good Sense.

Thus the *Christian Religion* is *all things to all Men*, it does good wheresoever it is planted; and tho the stubborn Resistance of the *Will*, whose Co-operation is necessary for the exercise of Vertue, permits it not to render all the Faithful *perfect*, yet cannot this hinder it from making 'em less sinful, and more fit for the Offices of Civil Life.

But now let us view the other Relations *Christianity* bears to the Light of Nature. That Religion, as appears by this Light, cannot be esteem'd the true one, which did not begin with the World, and has not been inviolably kept up to this time, unless, as I have said, we deny the *Providence* of God. Now it is most plain, that only *Christianity* can boast of this Antiquity, of being as old as the World, inasmuch as it is really, and in the main, the Religion of the *Hebreus*; and all the other Religions, not excepting the *Pagan*, have sprung up a long while after *Judaism*; I mean the true and pure *Judaism*, which is of as early a Date as the first Man; and not the false and corrupted, which commenc'd not till after the Death of *Christ Jesus*.
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Moreover, if the *Christian* be a false Religion, if there be Error and Contradiction in its Principles, how then has it come to pass that so many knowing and learned Persons, both *Greeks* and *Romans*, and such as were born in the most Polite Countrys; that so many subtle and piercing *Wits*, I say, should not discover in so many Ages the Falshood of this Religion, either before or after they embrac'd it? Pray what made 'em profess it at first, and stick so firmly after that to the Profession of it? Many of 'em had been educated in other Religions, and had suck'd in the Hatred of *Christianity*, even with their Mother's Milk. Some for professing it have been forc'd to quit their Estates, their Fortunes and Dignitys; others to lose their Lives, and all of 'em for the sake of that Humility which it teaches, have renounc'd the Vanity and Pride which great and deep Learning does commonly inspire. Who ever made choice of so unprofitable, so troublesom an Error? Men very seldom incline even to the side of Truth, when it carrys in it any thing that is shocking and grating: the *Will* seduc'd by the *Senses*, sometimes embraces that which *Reason* condemns; but never does it cleave to those Objects which are at once opposite both to *Reason* and *Sense*, unless the Mind be clouded with dark and black Vapours, and the Heart be engag'd by some more secret and powerful

ful Charms, than those of the *Senses* themselves.

The *Heathens*, who in the first Ages of the Church were so knowing and enlighten'd, us'd their utmost Power and Skill to spy out Contradictions and Absurditys in the *Christian* Religion; but to how little purpose have they labour'd? Could their strongest and subtlest Efforts discredit the Doctrine of *Jesus Christ*? Could they hinder the greatest *Genius's* from embracing and following it? So far have they been from this, that all the other Religions put together have not had so many learned Professors as the *Christian* has had, nor cultivated so many Sciences. This upholds and favours 'em all, this requires its Disciples to be Masters of 'em; as being secure, that the most subtle and curious Knowledg will much rather conduce to establish and confirm, than to undermine or shake its Principles. Had this Doctrine contradicted the Light of Reason, what Industry or Artifice could have maintain'd it against so many strong Oppositions, and so very nice Discussions? What Cunning or Sophistry could have salv'd its Repugnancys, and made it seem so *reasonable* during so many Ages, in so many Countrys, and to so many Minds of so lofty a Character, so different Humours and Tasts in other respects? But to be convinc'd yet further, that it is the *Christian* Religion alone, which Reason presents

presents to us for the true one, let us now proceed to consider the Ridiculousness and Folly of all the rest.

Nothing is so vain and sacrilegious as *Idolatry*, which sprung up long after the Creation of the World, and has been divided into various *Sects*, which all agree in the impious Worship of many *Gods*, to the Eternal Shame of Mankind. All Persons of Sense, who have by their Birth or Education been unhappily shut within the Pale of this Religion, or rather *Superstition*, have in time either openly declar'd against it, or at least ridicul'd it in their Hearts. To see enough of this, we need only read what *Socrates*, *Aristotle*, *Cicero*, *Seneca*, *Epictetus*, and many other *Philosophers* have utter'd about it; hereby shall we soon find what was their Opinion concerning it; not to mention the *Crimes* of those pretended Deitys, the Institution of their sottish *Ceremonys*, and the Pollutions of their abominable *Feasts*.

But what again shall we say of *Mahometism*, which had its beginning so many Ages after all the other Religions, and which ought upon that very score to be rejected by Persons of Sense and Judgment? Besides the Belief of *one* God, which Tenet it borrow'd from the *Christians* and *Jews*, it teaches hardly any thing more than what was either unfaithfully transcrib'd from their Books, or
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is repugnant to *Reason*, or perplex'd with Contradictions and self-Inconsistencys. The Author of it declares himself a *Prophet*, yet does he not foretel any things to come. He publishes for his Revelations some Passages, which he took and alter'd out of the Old and New *Testaments*, and which had been written many Ages before he was born: as if it was necessary that the *Angel Gabriel* should expressly reveal that to him, which was plainly written before in the Holy *Scriptures*, to the end that this Impostor might corrupt the *Christian* Doctrine by his fabulous Imaginations and plain Contradictions, with which he has mingl'd it in his *Alcoran*.

He pretends to reverence the Law of *Moses*, and borrows from it, tho he knows not why, the Rite of *Circumcision*. He owns *Jesus Christ* for a *Prophet*, for the *Messias*, for the *Anointed*, foretold by the Prophets, and for the holiest of Men; not considering that this *Jesus* either was *God* and *Man*, as he himself declar'd, and I shall hereafter prove him to be; and if so, *Mahomet* was an impious Fellow for denying it: or if he was but a mere *Man*, he could neither be a *Prophet*, nor excus'd from the charge of being an egregious Villain; nay in that case he was not only most proud and wicked, but a most weak and senseless Person, for thinking to make himself pass for a *God*.

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Mahometism praises the *Christian* Religion, which was before it; it honors the Prophets and Saints of both *Testaments*, it admits of the Gospel as reveal'd by God to *Christ Jesus*; it believes a future Judgment, not apprehending that this very Gospel, declar'd by that Sovereign *Truth* which cannot lie, affirms that Men will not be sav'd in that final Day of Account, but by the Observance of what that teaches; and that consequently the *Alcoran* which *Mahomet* foisted in after the Gospel, is useless and false. It is in vain to reply, that the *Gospel* it self has been corrupted and falsify'd; he that urges this will be oblig'd to prove it, and to make good his Charge by producing the true Gospel, or shewing what it was in its original Purity. It cannot with Reason be suppos'd that the Providence of God, who first imparted it to Men, should permit it to be so much corrupted, as that no part of it can be found uncorrupted. To which I add, that since there have been several Sects long before *Mahomet*, which have separated from *Christianity*, and declar'd themselves its mortal Enemies; had the *Gospel* been then falsify'd, certainly they would not have fail'd to object it, and instead of grounding their Disputes upon that Gospel which we now have, they would have produc'd another, which they would have made the Rule of their Faith, or at least the Subject of their Cavils. Again

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I say, that since *Mahomet* owns the *Christian* Religion to have been very good till his Appearance in the World; unless he be plainly inconsistent with himself, he must needs at once own that the Gospel was true until that time; inasmuch as a Religion grounded on a corrupted Scripture or a false Law, can in no wise be good or reasonable.

But if the *Gospel* has not been falsify'd, either at or before the Appearance of *Mahomet*, then the Religion grounded on it being as yet uncorrupted, and the Saints that profess it being till then very worthy to be reverenc'd, even in the Opinion of this Impostor; it may be most easily prov'd that it has not been falsify'd even to this time. A very little Knowledge of *Antiquity* will suffice to shew that the *Gospel* we now have, is entirely the same with what the *Christians* had in the first Ages of the Church.

But again, what can be more ridiculous than this Pretence of *Mahomet*, that we ought to believe him upon his bare Word, while he had not any *Natural Reason* to support his Fancys, as he himself owns, in that he endeavours to make 'em pass for the *Revelations* of the *Angel Gabriel*; albeit neither had he any Proof of these Revelations, as namely, any ancient Prophecys which foretold his Coming, any disinterested or creditable Persons which approv'd his Ministry, any declar'd Enemies, whom the Force
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of Truth had oblig'd to own him for a real Lawgiver; or in a word, any true Miracles to confirm his *Law*; I say any true ones, because as for those which he boasts of having done, they are so unintelligible and obscure, that they can in no wise pass for real and Authentick *Miracles*.

None but the *Christian* Religion can bring in its favour this Cloud of Witnesses, and draw undeniable Proofs of its Doctrine, even from the greatest Enemies of *Christ*. *Mahomet* indeed would fain have his own Testimony equivalent to all these Proofs; that is, the Testimony of a bare *Man*, who according to the Psalmist, the Truth of whose Sayings this Impostor allows of, is so very subject to Lying and Falshood*; of a proud ambitious Man, who had no other ground for what he said but merely his own Glory and Interest in the World, which is sufficient to expose his *Testimony* as foolish and ridiculous, and the *Faith* of those, who believe in him, vain and rash. On this account was he oblig'd to assert his Religion with his Sword in his Hand, and could never persuade by any other Reason but Force of *Arms*, which is a plain Argument of the Falshood of it, and of the weakness of those that embrace it.

* *Psal. 116. 11. All Men are Lyars.*

If Victories and Conquests are to be look'd on as certain Tokens of a Spirit of *Prophecy*, and of the Truth of *Religions*, then does it follow that a Multitude of Pyrats and Robbers, or at least those many Tyrants and Usurpers which have plunder'd Kings and oppress'd Nations to found themselves Empires, were *Prophets* sent from God to declare his *Law* to Men; as they were indeed, tho they knew it not themselves, most cruel *Scourges* of his Vengeance, and wicked Executioners of his holy Ordinances. Then must *Alexander* of *Macedonia* be esteem'd a great Prophet, who by so many signal Victories laid the Foundation of the *Grecian Monarchy*; *Julius Caesar* must be thought another, who going thro right and wrong, trampling on Divine as well as Human Laws, founded the *Roman Empire*; and *Tamerlane* another, who by wasting a great part of *Asia*, and carrying on execrable Treacherys in *Persia*, gave beginning to that vast Power which still continues among his Posterity in the Empire of the *Mogul*.

I have nothing to say here of the true Religion of the *Jews*, because it is the same with that of the Christians; and that which now goes by that Name, is, properly speaking, no other than a meer Corruption of the ancient *Synagogue*. The greatest part of those who have profess'd *Judaism* have deviated from the Purpose and Intention of God, in

that he made choice of the *Jewish* People above all others; and have refus'd to understand the true Sense of the Prophecys, and to own the Accomplishment of 'em, wherein consists the Essence and Sum of the *Law*. Hereupon has this wretched, this ungrateful *Nation* been afflicted with an extraordinary Punishment which has lasted seventeen hundred Years; for in short, it has been scatter'd all over the World, every where made subject to an ignoble Servitude, despis'd by all others; and which is more than all this, it has to this day been wholly depriv'd of Temple, Priest, Sacrifice and Miracles; it has had no Prophets, no holy or famous Men, as it had before this Trouble commenc'd: In a word, it is as it were the Carcase of a *dead Religion*, or rather a living Testimony of *Christianity*, and the antient Prophecys, which it still keeps, notwithstanding that they have foretold, as well the Rebellion and Desolation of this People, as the Establishment of the *Christian Law*.

The dreadful Punishment of 'em consists especially in that Blindness, whereinto they are fall'n, while besides other Marks of their Stupidity they substitute in the room of the holy *Scripture*, whose Witness they will not credit, the Fables of their *Talmud*, which they embrace as Oracles. This *Talmud*, among other Absurdities, pretends to shew the Rules, which God observes in spend-

ing

ing the Hours of the Day; it says that he employs the three first Hours in studying the Law, the three next in instructing those Infants which dy'd in their Non-Age, the three next in judging the World, and the three last in diverting himself with the great Beast the *Leviathan*; that when the Night is come (for these Visionists imagin that the Sun sets in Heaven just as it does with relation to the Earth) God then mounts himself upon a very swift *Cherub*, and visits eighteen thousand *Worlds* which he created.

But what shall I say of the Compact God made with *Rhaba* the Son of *Rhabana*, and what Trouble he express'd for having broken his Trust, of what God profer'd him to disengage him from his Promise, and of the Answer which *Rhaba's* Masters told him he should make to God; *Lord, I absolve thee from thy Oath?* And *Rabbi Solomon* tells us, that this Oath, from which God desir'd an Absolution, concern'd the Captivity of *Israel*. I think I need add no more to expose the Infatuation and Blindness of this People. Let not the *Rabbins* think to defend their Whimsys, and mitigate their extravagant Conceits, by having recourse to Mysterys, Metaphors, Allegorys, and that because *Christians* themselves do the same in explaining the holy Scripture; since the mysterious Allegorys contain'd in this being very conformable to its Literal and Historical meaning in other places,

do evidently appear to have no Resemblance of the Fopperys and Dreams of the *Talmud*. The *Jewish Doctors* can never put a plausible Construction upon these Visions, nor yet take away an *Allegorical Sense*, which they fancy to be in their *Talmud*, from the holy Scripture, without condemning the ancient *Hebrews* who have sincerely own'd an *Allegorical Sense* in the Scripture, as the most substantial and profound; so that if the present *Jews* will side with their Forefathers, they cannot but reject the Fables of their *Talmud*, and believe the Truths of the *Gospel*. If we would take the pains to enquire into other Religions of a later Date and lesser Fame, we should find 'em to be full as extravagant; I mean the Religions of the *East*, of the *Indys*, *Japan* and *China*: But because a particular Consideration of all these would take up too much time, and also whatever I could say to this purpose would be useless to those who have the least Knowledg of these *Sects*, I shall add no more on this Subject.

But here perhaps it will be said, that tho the *Morality* of the *Christian Religion* contains nothing in it repugnant to Reason, yet the *Faith* of it does, and by consequence it cannot be embrac'd without a great Imprudence. I shall answer this difficulty in the following Discourse, wherein I undertake to shew that the *Speculative Doctrines* of the true Religion ought to be above, tho not contrary

trary to Reason; and that it is hereby render'd more August, and more becoming the Majesty of God.

CHAP. VI.

The true Religion ought to teach things that are above Reason; also it ought to be reveal'd by God. The Christian Religion bears these Characters.

I Have shewn in the precedent Discourse, that God must needs have made the World for some last End, to which all the subordinate Ends are refer'd; and I think it has appear'd that this last End can be no other, but the first Principle, and the Eternal Author of all things, or rather the *Glory* he receives in being known and worship'd by his Creatures, and in the Communication of himself, or imparting as it were a share of his own Happiness to some of his Works.

Whence it plainly follows that none but rational Substances can truly adore the Divine Majesty, and possess a perfect Happiness; all the others of an inferior Order being incapable of enjoying or honouring God immediately by themselves, and without the intervention of an intelligent Nature, for whose

Use they are design'd, either to supply the necessities of the Body, or else to serve for Subjects of Contemplation to the Mind. Wherefore seeing God has compris'd in the rational Creature alone the *End* of his great Work, it must be peculiarly from this that he is to receive Adoration and Obedience, and to this must he needs communicate a perfect Happiness, that thereby he may illustrate his Goodness and Greatness; and herein do the *Ends* both of the Creator and the Creature, finely concenter and meet together.

But now it is most certain, that Man by the bare Guidance of *Natural Reason* can neither know what kind of Worship it is that he owes to God, nor obtain in this Life a perfect Happiness. Whence it follows, that either God will fail of what is due to him, and that Man will never arrive at his *End*; or that it was highly necessary that Man should be taught by Principles above his own *Reason* the true manner of serving God, and that after having serv'd him according to this manner he should at length attain his ultimate Happiness, and that not in this, but in another World. Now let us first see how incapable Man is in himself of attaining his last *End* in this Life; and in the next place, how incapable he also is with reference to the *Means*, by which and which alone it is to be attain'd.

Nothing

Nothing is more plain than that Man is so far from obtaining his Sovereign Happiness in this Life, that by Nature he has not Light enough to steer his Searches after it. For not to mention the Error of the greatest part of Men, who seek for Happiness in vicious Actions, wherein it is impossible that they should ever find it: The most sublime and soaring Minds are divided into various, nay into contrary Opinions about it. Moreover, Man having an eager Desire of Immortality, cannot see Death so very near to him without a great Reluctance and Uneasiness, which cannot but embitter and make his present Condition miserable, especially considering that in this World there is nothing, which is capable of filling his Heart, and satisfying all his Desires. Besides, he meets with so many Difficultys, so many Rubs and Impediments in his way, whenever he thinks to conduct his Life by the Rules of Reason, under whose Government alone he can expect to find Content and Quiet; also he is so unconstant in the possession of any Good, and so much expos'd to the Assaults of Evil, that he is more unhappy than the very Beasts, which were originally made for his Service. For albeit these are indeed not capable of a true and proper Happiness, yet do they not fail of obtaining both surely and easily whatever their Nature requires, and that Shadow of Happiness which consists in an undisturbed

Rest; so that their Condition is much happier than any thing that Man can aspire at, if we limit him only to this Life, and take from him the Hope of a better.

To this I add, that mere *Animals* have no Apprehension or Fear of *Death*; nay and when it comes, they once undergo it as *Nature* requires: but this they do without much Pain or tedious Agony, and seem to pass thro it in a trice. They moreover are not subject to many Diseases, nor to those violent Passions which occasion so much Trouble and Disorder in the Heart of *Man*; they quietly enjoy those Pleasures which agree to 'em, without either Sin or Shame; they readily provide whatever they have need of, and the Divine Assistance and Protection never fail 'em in their wants. Wherefore if *Man* in this Life be yet further from the Happiness proper to him, than Brutes from theirs, it plainly follows, that if he carry not his Aims beyond the Limits of this present World, he is the most wretched of all the *Creatures*, in that he fails of Means to lead him to his ultimate End and true Felicity.

Tho it should be reply'd, that God may illustrate his own *Glory* in the Misery and Punishment of Men, yet what I maintain would still hold good: For besides that it would not be reasonable that the Cause of so general a Punishment, and the *Glory* God sought for in it, should be never discover'd in this

this Life ; it must be consider'd that the greatest Chastisements are not always levell'd at the greatest Vices, nay that frequently in this Life it comes to pass by a wonderful Guidance of Providence, that the Innocent are oppress'd while the Wicked are rais'd to great Prosperity. Upon which account we can in no wise praise and glorify God in the Punishment of Men, unless he rectifys and amends this Disorder ; and to avoid the Imputation of an unjust Government, proportions his Inflictions to the Crimes of Men, more exactly in the next Life than he does in this.

But if the Divine Providence be not glorify'd by Men in this present Life, 'twill never obtain its End ; and if it never obtain its End with reference to Men, neither will it in reference to the other Creatures, which were made for their Service, and cannot glorify God but by the Mediation of a rational Nature : so that in this Case they would always abide without any relation to a last End, and would consequently be superfluous and useless. This Conclusion must needs be drawn, as touching the whole of Mens Duration here below, if in a course of so many Years God should never manifest the Rigour of his Justice, nor the Sweetness of his Mercy. Wherefore it is absolutely necessary to suppose another Life, in which whatsoever seems irregular in this may at last be amended, that

that so the Divine Providence may have the Glory of an equitable Government, and Human Nature may be in a right way to praise its Creator. But whether for this Reason, or that we may have a true Notion of the Sovereign Happiness, it is certain that our Conceptions of the other Life ought to be exact and distinct, which yet by Nature we cannot have in this. The utmost Reasonings of Men could never advance to that Height, as may easily be seen from the Doctrine of the Philosophers, who have spoken so darkly, so variously and uncertainly of the future State.

Wherefore the true Happiness of Man, of which it is the Business of Religion to inform us, or at least the Worship we owe to God, must needs have been establish'd upon the certain Knowledge of another Life. Now the particular Knowledge of Eternity is far above the reach and capacity of Reason; for Reason having so regular a Commerce, and so streight a Connection with the Senses, has hardly any Glimpse of those things, which are plac'd at a distance from them. It cannot with all its Lights represent to us any thing more, but that the ultimate Happiness of the Rational Nature consists, as I have said, in the Action of the noblest part of Man, about the noblest Object, perfectly possess'd, and it self perfect: but withal, it can teach us from Universal Experience, that this Sovereign

vereign *Happiness* can never be found in the present Life.

But supposing that mere Reason could clearly inform us, touching the *Happiness* of the other Life, yet could it never give us a distinct Knowledge of the Means that lead to it; for tho' the Means were never so natural and proportionate to the Happiness we speak of, yet could we not assuredly know 'em to be such: and we should still stand in need of a brighter Light than that of Reason, to see that such natural Means, and which are naturally known, have such a Congruity and Relation to this End, as that they are capable of bringing us to it.

It cannot be question'd, that Man has need of this Light, unless we at once believe that mere Nature can instruct us concerning the Divine Decree, so far as it relates to this End and these Means; which cannot be said with any the least ground. For all the Reflections which Man is able to make upon the Beauty of the Creatures, or any other thing in this Life, cannot extend so far as that, as is evident to any one that fathoms the Depth, and sees the Reach of human Understanding: It being remember'd that all this while I speak of Man, so far as he knows himself by his own Experience, and according to his present Condition.

Wherefore it was necessary, that as the perfect *Happiness* of Man is only to be met with

with in another Life, so the true Religion should extend its Views beyond the Boundaries of natural reasoning, which hardly exceed this present Life, that it may clearly propose to us our ultimate *End*, together with the certain *Means* of attaining it *. To which I add, that bare human *Reason* cannot instruct us about a due Method of *worshipping* God. Indeed we having some Knowledge of God in a natural way by the Effects of his Power and Goodness, may be assur'd that he is not *material*, that he is *one*, and absolutely *perfect*: But yet as in seeing a very fine Picture, we straightway guess that the Painter who drew it excell'd in his Art, and that he well understood the Proportions and Colours to be us'd in a Draught, tho at the same time we may not guess, whether in his Temper he was Wild or Grave, Sweet or Morose, Amorous or Indifferent; so likewise the Consideration of the *Creatures* cannot give us an exact and clear Idea of the Divine Perfections, at the most it can afford us only a dark and confus'd Notion of them, under the general Character of *Infinite Perfection*, which must always be ascrib'd to the Deity. But who can conceive by the bare Light of *Nature* the particular Contents of this infinite Perfection? Who can tell whether it rather inclines to the

Severity of *Justice* than to the Sweetness of *Mercy*? Or how far this Justice and Mercy do extend? What kind or measure of Love God bears to the *Creatures*, and among the rest to *Man*? What it is that he requires from him? In what sense he is willing to do him Good? What manner of Worship he prescribes to him? And in a word, what Degree of Perfection he expects in him? But if we cannot distinctly conceive even these Particulars, what may we think of the *Expiation* of Sins, which are so frequently committed, and are so very incident to human Frailty? Is it not altogether necessary to know what it is we are to fear or hope for, upon the commission of them? To know whether the *Mercy* of God kindly promises, or his *Justice* flatly denies a Pardon of them? How many Persons must needs fall into Despair, and, in that suppos'd irremediable State, abandon themselves to all manner of Wick- edness, had they not a certain knowledg that their Sins might be forgiven? Tho a Man were not already overwhelm'd in Vice, yet if he doubted of an Article, on which depends a most happy or unhappy Eternity, what Resolution could he ever come to, what Rule of Life could he propose to follow?

But supposing the Mind of Man could see by its own Light that there is place to hope for *Pardon*; supposing he could convince himself, that God is better pleas'd in shewing
Mercy

Mercy than Vengeance; yet still how could he know whether this *Pardon* would be extended to a great Number, or only to a few Persons? Whether to some lesser Faults only, or in general to all? How often God forgives, whether the first Offence only, or frequent Relapses into the same, and Abuses of Forgiveness? What it is that Man ought to do on his part, in order to obtain *Remission*? Whether he is oblig'd to make satisfaction, by exercising Hardships on his Body, and in some Cases by the Effusion of Blood? Or, whether to the Mortifications of his own Flesh, he is to add such good Works as regard the *common Benefit*? In what proportion these Mortifications ought to be done, both as to the Time and the Intensity of 'em? Or whether it be not sufficient to have a truly penitent Heart *within*? Whether those Faults, by which our Neighbour has been signally prejudic'd, ought to be repair'd according to the strictness of Justice, by giving *Eye for Eye*, *Hand for Hand*, *Life for Life*; or whether the Reparation of them ought to be moderated by the Rules of *Charity*? In short, what probable Token could a Man have that the Divine Majesty is appeas'd and satisfy'd? This matter can never be solv'd and determin'd by the mere Light of *Reason*. Wherefore it is plain that the Knowledge of these things must needs proceed from elsewhere, and surpass the *Natural*

1st Sphere of Human Understanding.

Supposing then that Man were in that *natural* State, which I have been speaking of, and which he is certainly in at the present, and that withal there were a Religion besides the *Christian*, which contain'd nothing opposite to the Light of Nature (albeit such a one has never yet been found) and at once contain'd nothing above it: This Religion would not challenge our Belief and Approbation, while on one hand it would shew us a fair Probability; on t^other, it would be convicted of Falshood, because it could not inform us by the bare Light of Nature, of that holy Commerce which there ought to be between God and Man, which consists of Benefits, Promises, and Ordinances on God's part; of Thanks, Hopes, and Services on Man's; all which together do comprise the *Essentials* of Religion. It is plainly impossible that we should render to so great a *Majesty* the Worship that is due to it, unless God himself declare the manner of it, and the Obedience of Man make up the Perfection and the better part of this *Worship*. The most puny Earthly *Princes* cannot be rightly serv'd, but according to that Model of Submission, which they themselves are pleas'd to prescribe. Should we not make sport and flout at a *Rustick*, who tho he had never peep'd out beyond his Village, yet should pretend to regulate and order the Affairs of Court? If an
Idiot

Idiot should undertake to discourse of *Physicks*, *Mathematicks*, *Astronomy*, or the like, according to his own rude Ideas, what sottish Blunders must he needs commit? And if an ignorant *Peasant*, who never was us'd to any thing else but the Plow and the Cart, should take upon him to frame a Clock or a Watch, what a pretty piece of Work would he make of it! But now consider that there is much less Proportion between the most piercing Understanding and the Divine *Mysteries*, than between a stupid, ignorant Man, and the abstrusest *Sciences*, or nicest pieces of *Art*. What likelihood is there, that Divine matters should be easier to be search'd into than sensible, and those which Nature has expos'd to our *Bodily View*? Or rather, how should those be obvious and easily knowable, if even these be hidden and kept from our Knowledge? The greatest *Philosophers* have not yet given the Reason of the Flux and Reflux of the *Sea*, nor discover'd the secret Quality of the *Loadstone*, by which it constantly turns toward its *Pole*, draws Iron to it on one side, and pushes it away on the other; nor have they yet given any clear Exposition of the Nature of *Colours*, which is the only Object that constantly faces us, and makes its Appearance to our Sight; nor do they know how *Vision* is perform'd, and how a whole *Hemisphere* is figur'd in the *Retina*, without the least Confusion, tho it be so disproportionate.

proportionately small : In a word, they do not understand *Nature* ; the more they consider the Works, so much the less do they fathom the *Secrets* of it. Now if the most enlighten'd Persons are blind as to these matters, how shall human Understanding, which is so very weak and short-sighted, be able to prescribe a due Method for the Worship of God ? And how shall the *whole* of the true Religion be built upon natural Notions ? Certainly this must needs have such Principles, and lay down such Doctrines as do not just exceed the Capacity of human *Reason*; but are infinitely above it. For in short, as a wise *Pagan* thought, if Reason be non-plus'd and dazl'd at the Contemplation of *Nature*, even in the most vile and abject Beings, what will it be at the sight of the most noble and lofty things* ! Lastly we may add, as another Proof of this Truth, the universal Opinion and Consent of Men, whom the same general Instinct inclines to believe a *Religion*, nay and to believe it as taught by God. Hence as the true Religion has *really* this Advantage, so all the false ones, to gain themselves Credit, have pretended to the same by feigning *Revelations* from God, from *Angels*, *Sibyls* and *Prophets* : For which

* Naturæ rerum Vis atque Majestas in omnibus momentis
Fide caret. *Plin. Hist. Nat. Lib. 7. C. 1.*

Reason the *Academys* and *Sects* of the Philosophers, who undertook to go no further than Nature led 'em, have never appear'd to concern themselves in founding *Religions*. Wherefore the principal Character of the true Religion is that which an *Ancient* ascribes to *God*, namely of being so much more known as he is rais'd above our Knowledg; or that which has been also given to the *Sun*, namely that we discover so many more Wonders in this noble Star, as we find our selves incapable of discovering 'em all.

It is impertinent to reply, that *Christianity* is as old as the World, and that at the beginning of one and t'other we admit of the Law of *Nature*; for this Name was indeed given to the Law of the first times, not that it did not depend on *supernatural* Principles and Divine *Revelation*, as appears by the Belief of the necessity of a *Mediator*, of a Remedy against *Original Sin*, and many other Articles; but to distinguish it from the written Law, which immediately follow'd. But supposing it were not requisite that the Knowledg which ought to spring from the true *Religion* should be so very lofty, yet still must it needs be own'd that it cannot be grounded on bare human *Reasoning*. For the Generality of Men being unable to speculate sublime and lofty things, either because of the weakness of their Mind, or because the Necessitys of the Body, and the Hurry

of

of the Passions, the Pains and Pleasures of Life hinder 'em from using a steady Application, must needs then be without any Religion at all, or if they have any, yet must they be forc'd to borrow the Light which guides 'em to it, from the most enlighten'd Sages of profane Antiquity. Now tho these towering Genius's might discover this hidden Treasure in the Fund of their own Minds; which many others of grosser Capacitys had not the least Glimps of; yet seeing all of them have never agreed, or at least but in very few things, what will the greatest part of Mankind do? Whose Opinion shall they venture to take up with? If they have no Knowledg or Discernment of these matters, how shall they be able to make an Estimate, which side among so many is most in the right? How can they understand all those Subtletys which every single Sect makes use of to expound or abet its Doctrines? Wherefore it is plain that these few soaring Wits could not each of them cause themselves to be adher'd to, because they were of so many different Minds; and that the Generality would not be able to distinguish those who utter'd Truth from Cheats and Impostors, both upon the account of their too subtle Reasonings, and the meanness of their own Capacitys. Thus the greatest part of Mankind not knowing what to be at, nor which way to turn, could never

assuredly know the true *Religion*, which would be the greatest Inconvenience imaginable.

Hence was it absolutely necessary that *Religion* should be reveal'd to us, that it should be establish'd on the Infallibility of the Word of God; that so concealing it self on one hand from the Subtlety of the Learned, and accommodating it self on t'other to the weakness of the Unlearned, it might be in some sort adapted and proportion'd to all the World*: Human *Reason* being so very weak, as we daily experience it, could not be the Foundation of the true Religion, and therefore was it altogether needful that the Divine *Revelation* should be such, in that it is above all natural Reasoning, and stands on the Authority of God. Now they, who are but never so little vers'd in *Christianity* cannot but know that it teaches such Truths as do transcend the Bounds of our *Reason*; so that I need not so much trouble my self to prove this Article, as to shew that the *Christian* Religion is unjustly accused of teaching those Doctrines, which not only transcend, but contradict the Light of *Reason*; of propounding impossible and incredible things, which plainly oppose our Natural Notions, destroy our first Principles of common Sense, and

* Thom. Aq. cont. Gent. L. 1. C. 5.

are consequently false. I shall see in the following Chapter how little ground there is for this Accusation.

C H A P. VII.

What the Christian Religion teaches and propounds to Men, as reveal'd by God, tho' it be above, yet is not contrary to Reason.

HERE in the first place it will be expedient to weigh the difference between these following Propositions.

1. I do not see by what natural Reason it can be prov'd that this or that thing *is*.

2. I do not see *how* it is or can be.

3. I see by natural Reason that it *cannot* be.

The first and second Propositions do betoken nothing that is contrary to the Light of Nature, they only import that one cannot judg by this Light of Nature, whether they be true or false: And this is what I have already prov'd in the precedent Discourse, touching most of the Doctrines of the true Religion. It is only the third Proposition that includes a repugnance and formal contrariety to the Light of Reason, and by con-

sequence points out to us where there is Falshood. But now it is certain that this cannot be found in any Article of the *Christian* Religion, and that the utmost Efforts of its greatest Enemys to shew it repugnant to *Reason*, have been vain and to no purpose: had they ever been successful, they would have subdu'd at one stroke all those great *Genius's*, those learned Personages, that have embrac'd and constantly defended the *Christian* Faith during so many Ages, and long before the other Religions appear'd.

What can those Mushroom-Wits say, whose Eyes are so weak as that they cannot bear the Light of the great and splendid Truths of *Christianity*? It may be their natural Enquirys may suggest to 'em this Fancy, that the miserable Eternity of *Hell* is an excessive Punishment for one single Sin; that the Justice of God has been too severe to the Apostate *Angels* and the first *Man*. But I give 'em to understand that these Inflictions, however rigorous they may seem, yet do not imply any thing that opposes right *Reason*; these are Instances of the Divine Conduct, which passes all the Rules of human *Policy*. We do not sufficiently conceive the Majesty of an offended God, the Evil and Enormity of Sin, the Obligation of the Creatures to the Creator; it does not belong to such shallow Minds as ours to censure the adorable Judgments of an infinite *Wisdom*.
On

On the contrary, we rather ought to admire, and hereby take occasion to consider the Excellency of the *Christian Religion*, which does not indeed debase Divine things quite down to us, but yet lifts *us* above our selves, and even up to *them*, to the end that it may make us conceive and understand 'em.

Should any Man doubt of a *Mathematical Demonstration*, should he question what *Reason* proves, what *Mechanick* teaches, what *Experience* shews, touching the Extension and Distance of the Heavenly Bodys, the immense Bigness and regular Motion of the Stars, the prodigious Force of the Lever, the horrible Effects of Gun powder; tho these things at first blush appear so strange and incredible, would not such a one, I say, be esteem'd a Madman, and as a Person beside himself? And how near then do they come to this Character, who will not credit the *Eternal Truths*, unless they conform to their gross Ideas, and fall under the outward Senses?

But here again, it may be an *Infidel* will say, that several Articles of the *Christian Faith* are really and directly *contrary* to Reason: As for instance, to believe three Divine *Persons*, which are not three *Gods*, but one God; to believe that one of these Persons was made *Man*, and so became at once both God and Man; that this God-man was born and liv'd in extreme Disgrace and Poverty;

that he suffer'd Death upon a Cross, cover'd with Reproaches, and loaded with Pains; that he dy'd for *Man*, albeit his rebellious Subject and declared Enemy. This, thinks he, is to credit things impossible, and which directly oppose good Sense; but I say, that these seeming Impossibilitys are only his Fancys, and cannot be found in the Articles of our Faith. For first, so far is *Christianity* from denying the *Unity* of God, that it defys any other Religion whatever, to propose an Unity, which, not to say surpasses, but even equals or comes near to that, which it ascribes to God; that is, an Unity of Nature, Substance, Essence, Existence, Divinity, an Unity of Wisdom, Will, Power, Causality in forming the World, without any Contrariety, Difference, Inequality, Change, Composition; and in a word, *one only God*. And can there be a more perfect, a more pure and simple *Unity* conceiv'd than this?

But you say, replys the *Pagan*, that in this Unity there are three Persons. 'Tis true we do so, and we may see an Image of this Truth in the Nature of Shadows and Traces. There is but *one* Sun in our World, yet he has in himself a Fountain of Light, Rays and Heat, which are three distinct things. The rational Soul is *one* in the Body, and yet it has three several Powers, Understanding, Memory and Will. And a thousand other

Substances

Substances there be, in which *Number* is found to consist with *Unity*.

Now if three different things concur in *one* Star and *one* Soul, why may there not be three Hypostases, Subsistences or Persons in *one* Divine Nature? I own indeed that these Creatures are not *one* with exactly the same Unity, that is in God, or rather is God: but withal I affirm, that the very *Trinity*, which is God himself, is much more *one* than the *Unity* of these Creatures. I mean, the Divine Unity, tho subsisting in the *Trinity*, is infinitely more simple than the Unity of any created Substance; for it is certain that these three adorable Persons do agree in the same common Nature. But the Case is far different, as to the *Sun* with respect to his Rays, Light and Heat, and to the human Soul with respect to its Powers; the Rays, Light and Heat in the Solar Body are not one and the same Essence; nor are the Understanding, Memory and Will the very same thing with the Soul. Whence it follows, that those Multiplications which are found in created Unitys do in some sense alter the *Unity*, by the Differences and Distinctions which attend 'em; but that the *Trinity* of *Persons* does in no wise detract from the Unity of the Godhead, because each of 'em keeping its Propertys, they subsist in Unity, or rather are the Unity it self.

But

But if our Opponent still replies, that the Unity of God is not so compatible with a Trinity of *Persons*, as the Unity of the Sun is with its Emanations, and that of the Soul with its Powers; I'll return him a second Answer, that there is nothing in the *Trinity* of the Divine Persons, which at all intrenches on the Sovereign *Unity*, or which hinders it from being less *one* than any created Substance; because here the *Person* producing, produces only with it self, of it self, and in it self, and the Substance produc'd is the Substance of that which produces, and the very same with it, excepting only as to the *Personal* Relations, which are indeed opposite to each other. But to render my Answer more solid and exact, I would fain know what Repugnance and Contradiction there can be imagin'd between the Unity of Nature and the Trinity of *Persons* in God. Perhaps it will be said, that this appears from a general Induction of the Creatures, in which *one* Nature is always join'd with *one* Subsistence, and among them the same Nature has never been seen in three Subsistences or *Persons*. But in answer to this, pray what necessity is there that the Substance of God should be of the same Condition with that of created Substances, and that it should be incapable of subsisting in three *Persons*, for this very Reason, because all finite Beings are so? On the contrary, is it not very probable that God in
this

this respect, as well as many others, may be different from all the Creatures; and that containing in himself all possible Goods without any the least Defect, he is *one*, yet so as not to be alone; is fruitful, yet so as not to multiply his own proper Substance; is able to diffuse himself infinite ways, yet so as not to go out of himself, or to lessen any of his own Perfections? So that the case standing thus, all the Difficulty, which *Heathens* think to be invincible, is reduc'd to this point, that human *Reason* is too weak for raising it self to so lofty a Conception, that Experience indeed does not shew us any Nature like that of God, which we readily acknowledg, not only as touching this *Mystery* which is the most profound of all, but also as to many other Articles of the *Christian Religion*; and in a word, that we cannot comprehend the *Manner*, how the Nature of God subsists, it being a necessary Consequence, that as the Subject is Divine, so the way of its subsisting is incomprehensible; for could we comprehend it, then would it follow, that it is below human Understanding, because what is comprehended must needs be inferior to that which comprehends it.

But must not a Man be very indiscreet to deny that in God which he does not comprehend, seeing he is not sufficiently enlighten'd to know even that which makes himself to be a *Man*? For to address my self to one of those

those *Libertines* that would subject things Divine to their *Reason*, and not their *Reason* to things Divine, let him tell me what that *Soul* is, by which he lives and bears the Name of a rational Being ; or does he know how the Vegetative, the Sensitive, and the rational Souls are join'd together ? Does he know whether they are one and the same Essence ; or whether they are only coupl'd, and what are those Links which couple 'em together, or whether they are separate from each other ? Whether the rational Soul only be immortal ; whether the two others, which first appear in Man, do expire with the Body ; or whether being blended with the rational Soul, they obtain by virtue of this blending an *Immortality*, which they have not in Beasts and Plants ? In short, does he know how the *Soul* is united to the Body, and how it is disunited from it ? Can he tell me what is the Bond that ties together so different, so opposite Substances ? And how these Parts of human Constitution when join'd together, do mutually assist and help each other in all their Operations ?

Human Understanding is altogether ignorant of these and many other things, and yet does it think its Sight strong enough to behold the Splendors of the *Deity* without being blinded or dazl'd ? But perhaps an Enemy of *Christianity* will tell me, that allowing that a Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the

Godhead

Godhead cannot be prov'd to be impossible, yet another thing there is, which plainly shocks good Sense and Reason, namely what the Christian Faith proposes, touching the second Person of the *Trinity*; that he being God as well as the first and the third, yet was made Man; that he was born not only in that Baseness which is common to our Nature, but in a State of extreme Poverty; that after having pass'd away his Life in Abjection and Trouble, he ended it by a cruel and ignominious Death. We need not here seek for Subtletys, says our Adversary, nor examin the dark Philosophical Terms, *Essence*, *Substance*, *Subsistence* and *Person*; it suffices to understand, according to the usual Acceptation, the Terms of Majesty and Meanness, of Divinity and Humanity, of God and a Gibbet, in order to make a Judgment, that so opposite, so contrary things cannot be united; the Union of which notwithstanding is made the Foundation of *Christianity*. Indeed this Objection seems very plausible, but at the bottom it has so little in it, that I engage after having confuted it, to draw from it clear and solid Proofs, for establishing the *Christian* Faith, and confounding the other Errors of those that oppose it. Do the Infidels say, it is impossible for God to be made Man, and to become poor, to be despis'd and evilly intreated, to be persecuted and condemn'd to Death? I grant
em

'em indeed that it is impossible for God to cease to be *God*, by becoming *Man*; this is directly repugnant to Reason, but this is not what *Christianity* teaches, whose Faith is this, that God still remaining God, united to his Person the *Human Nature*: And what Impossibility is there in this? Or who will undertake to demonstrate that such an Union cannot be? Is it impossible that the supreme *Good*, which is most eagerly bent to diffuse and communicate it self, should be imparted and united to a Creature in the highest degree of Union which is possible, that is, in the Personal or Hypostatical Degree? Is there any Repugnancy or Contradiction imply'd in this, with reference either to God or to the *Creature*? Has the Divine Magnificence any other Bounds than those it fixes to it self? Is the *Creature* made so much an Enemy of its own Good, as to be incapable of receiving the greatest Favours? What reason have we to deny our own *Species* an Advantage, which raises it to the highest pitch of Glory? Is not God as powerful as Earthly *Kings* and the ancient *Cæsars*, who could associate to the Empire the meanest of their *Subjects*? In a word, is not the Divine Essence in the second *Person* of the *Trinity*, as capable of being Hypostatically united with the human Nature, as the rational Soul is of being united with a bodily Substance, and of making by that Union one single Person?

Does

Does it seem to be impossible that God should be *poor*? I grant that it *really* is so, for how should he become poor who has in himself immense Riches, or rather, who is his own Treasure, and that of all the Creatures? But yet all the Riches he possesses as *God* do not hinder, but that in the human Nature, which he took upon him, he may fail of some things which he has need of. And how can we think it strange that he should be despis'd in this *Human* Nature, since he always has been so, even in the *Divine*? For in short, by how many Injurys and Blasphemys has Man in all times outrag'd God? Do they say that God cannot die? This is very true, with reference to the *Divine* Nature, which is impassible and immortal, which is all Delight and Life it self; but is it any Contradiction, that the Soul should be separated from the Body, as to that *Humanity* which has been Hypostatically join'd to a *Divine Person*?

But granting, say they, that this was possible, supposing that God was *willing* it should be so, yet how was it possible that God should be *willing*? Is it not repugnant to the Rules of Reason and Decency, that *God* should be subjected to so much Baseness, should be expos'd to so great Indignitys, and reduc'd to such shameful Extremitys: In a word, which is a mighty Refuge to the *Gentile* Opposers of *Christianity*, that he should be

be reduc'd to Extravagance and Foolishness*? Thus does the *Natural* Man speak, without understanding what it is he speaks. Thus does he hold his Hand before his Eyes when he has the *Sun* directly in his Face; which yet does in no wise shew that the Sun has no Light, but that its very Light makes it in some sense dark, and that it cannot be clearly seen for being too visible and bright. But what have you to say, who spy so much Unbecomingness in that which causes our Sovereign Happiness? Are you ignorant that there is nothing unbecoming in *Love*, and that when rightly directed, all its Excesses are reasonable? Do you think it ridiculous, that God as God should love at all, or if he does, that he should love in a different way from the *Creatures*, whose Love is so interested and weak? If there be in God an infinite Power, Justice and Greatness, why may we not as well suppose in him an infinite Love, Mercy and Goodness? Do they find no Contradiction in the *Justice* of God, whereby he punishes our Crimes; and yet do they find it in his Goodness, whereby he communicates his Benefits to us? notwithstanding that if I dare speak so, the latter appears to be more proper and essential to God than the former, seeing that the one

* 1 Cor. i. 23.

depends upon what God is in himself, the other upon what we are with reference to him *? Was not the Knowledge of the Goodness and Love of God toward us, the most necessary and effectual Method for inclining us to praise, honour, love, obey and trust in him, and entirely to consecrate our selves to his Service; in all which together consists the Spirit of true *Religion*? Has not the Love which accompanys a Benefit, and with which it is confer'd, much greater Force to excite in us the Sentiments of Gratitude and *Love*, than the bare Benefit it self, tho never so great? What Token did God give us of his *Love*, in creating the World, which was the first Work by which he display'd his *Divine* Perfections? In this indeed I own an Infinite Wisdom, a Sovereign Majesty, an Absolute Power and Independance, a *Being* that contains and infinitely excels all other Beings; but I do not here see an Infinite Goodness and *Love*. The Creation discovers to us but very little of those Divine Attributes, which, if I may so speak, are those of the first Rank: This is no more than if a puissant *Monarch* should assign to his *Slaves* just their Nourishment and Subsistence, to perswade 'em that he mightily loves 'em. Take but a brief Survey of all

De suo bonus, de nostro justus. *Tertul.*

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that God has given us in the course of Nature, and see whether among all these Benefits there is any that implies such an Excess of Love as he has shewn to us, in making himself *Man*, that is, in doing what the Infidels think *Foolishness*.

He has produc'd for the sake of Men, Creatures that are subject to Corruption and Death, without any expence or pains to himself; he has given 'em a very short Life that is full of Miserys and Troubles: But does this enough manifest the immense Riches of his *Goodness* to us? Are such limited Favours as these sufficient to perswade us, that God is no less Good and Merciful than he is Great and Just? Yet our Knowledge of the former was more absolutely needful than that of the latter: And how could God more conveniently and more effectually give us this Knowledge, than by communicating his *very self*, than by enriching us at his own Cost, and by doing good in a way, that was most suitable to the Idea of an Infinite *Goodness*? Wherefore seeing God may well be suppos'd to have dealt thus with us, how can this be urg'd as a Reason for not believing any thing of it? This would be to turn the utmost Effect of God's *Magnificence* into a Method of inclining us, not only to refuse him what is his due, but even to be *ignorant* of what he gives us.

Again,

Again, is it objected that God by uniting himself with the *Human Nature* must needs have put himself in such a State of Ignominy, as was altogether unworthy of his adorable Majesty? On t^other hand I say, that he never did any thing else, by which his *Majesty* appear'd in a greater Lustre; not to mention that a *God-Man* is a more magnificent and marvellous Work, than thousands of Worlds, supposing God had pleas'd to create 'em; nor that his Greatness shines more illustriously in this one Master-piece, than in whatever he could produce *without* himself: To pass by this, I say, is it not admirable for him to forgive in such a way, as that the Pardon is at once an Effect of pure Pity, and yet without supposes an abundant *Satisfaction*? Who has ever heard that the acquitting of a Criminal is more satisfactory to *Justice*, than if his Crime be severely and eternally punish'd? Or, that the forgiving of a *Debt* can turn to more account than if Payment be exacted according to the Rigor of the Law? Yet who does not see with what *Decorum* the Divine Wisdom has reconcil'd so contrary things in his adorable Decree to pardon Mens Offences, it being provided that the second Person of the Blessed *Trinity* should become a Ransom for them, by assuming to him the Human Nature? How much more exquisite and abundant must this *Satisfaction* needs be look'd on, than if all Mankind had

been hurl'd down into Hell, and God had appear'd his Anger by an eternal *Punishment* of so many guilty Souls? What is more great and more worthy of God than an inflexible *Justice*, which would not yield that Sin should be unpunish'd, join'd at once with an exceeding *Clemency*, which was willing to pardon all Crimes without punishing the Criminals, and by being reveng'd upon none but him who was pleas'd to suffer the Punishment, which they had deserv'd? What can be a more peculiar Mark both of a God and a most loving God, than for him to recompense the most heinous Injuries with signal Benefits, than to spread his Favours and make his *Grace* abound where *Sin* abounds, than to die for *him* that would take away *his* Life, and to do more *Good* to his very Enemies than *Men* are willing to do to their intimate Friends, and those from whom they have receiv'd the greatest Favours? What can be more Divine and God-like than infinitely to exceed whatever Ideas we can form of a perfect *Love*, and to do that for ungrateful *Man* which *Man* could never do for a beneficent God? Is it thought indecorous and unseemly, that a *God-Man* should be *poor*, not only destitute of the Pleasures and Glorys of the World, but also cover'd with Reproach and Disgrace? Let those, who fancy this, consider that God could not make himself known as *God*, but by wholly despising what the

World

World esteems. What would they think of a *Monarch* that should be delighted with wearing the Habit of a Peasant, and with living in the Cottages of Shepherds, that should mind nothing else but Country Diversions, and limit his whole Ambition to the *Village*? Would they not think such a one out of his Senses? Now what are Earthly Riches, the Poms, the Pleasures and Grandeur of this World, in regard to a *God* whose Majesty cannot be contain'd in the immense Extension of the Heavens? Since nothing upon Earth was worthy of him, was not this ground enough for him to neglect whatever Men do so eagerly seek after? But neither was this the only Motive, which occasion'd a *God-Man* to despise all worldly Goods; he also renounc'd 'em, because as he was the Sovereign *Wisdom*, it became him to refer his Actions to so excellent an End, as is that of instructing Mankind, and leading 'em to *Happiness* by the way of Vertue. Now it is plain, that a poor and painful Life of a *God-man* was most proper and effectual for inspiring us with the greatest Ardor and Desire after the things of the other Life, and with the greatest Indifferency and Unconcernedness for the things of this. Moreover, it being usual for the Riches, Pleasures and Glorys of this *World* to divert and turn us out of the way of Vertue, and the Esteem of these Temporal Goods being inconsistent

with the Esteem of those Goods which are Eternal; how could the Divine *Wisdom* better serve as a Guide to us in so difficult a Path, than by despoiling it self of all those Goods which it intended that we should despise? Nor is it enough for acquiring *Christian* Vertues and Eternal Happiness, that we despise the Goods of this Life, but we must also not fear all those Evils with which this Life abounds: for which Reason the *God-man* has not only rejected whatever Men desire, but has also voluntarily chosen whatever they fear. Thus the *Wisdom* incarnate despising all that which the Wicked hope for, embracing all that which they abhor, and doing all that which they wonder at, has distinguish'd himself, as a Father of the *Church* observes, from the Rout of Mankind, by such Tokens as were proper for a true Instructor of them*. Why then should we think that an Indignity to God, which is a most admirable Effect of his *Wisdom*? Let us rather on t'other hand stop and consider this profound *Mystery*, and see what *Glory* accrues from it to God.

Is there any thing so glorious to God in all the Grandeur of the Celestial Court, and in the whole Extent of the Divine *Monarchy*, as for him to reckon a *God-Man* among his

* Omnia contemnendo quæ pravi Homines cupiunt, & omnia repertiendo quæ horrescunt, & omnia faciendo quæ mirantur. D. August. de verâ Relig. L. 1. C. 3.

Subjects? Can any thing be conceiv'd that raiseth a greater Lustre to the Throne of the *Divinity*, than the Homage which *Jesus* does to the Almighty, as a Sacrifice by dying on a Cross, and which he will eternally do him as his immortal *Priest*? Whence can God receive greater Honour, than from the miraculous Works, the divine Actions and the infinite *Merits* of so August a Person? Let it not be said, that Majesty and Love are inconsistent and unsuitable, excepting it be amongst Men: For in short, the Love of God towards us was so far from lessening his Majesty and Glory, that it gave him occasion not only of having much Homage done him, and of exacting Tributes proportion'd to his *Greatness*, but also spread abroad those Treasures which he would never have communicated, had he not become a partaker of our Miserys. Is it then *Foolishness* for God to have found out the Secret of thus repairing *Human* Nature, of displaying his ardent Love, and discovering the Abysses, those profound and immense Abysses, into which the intended Brevity of this Discourse permits me not to enter any further, and in which they happily lose themselves, whose Eyes God has open'd to behold his Wonders?

The most acute and knowing Men do not find any Absurdity either in this, or any other Mysterys of the *Christian Religion*. On the contrary, they are so delighted in considering

what they discover in 'em that is plausible and reasonable, that they not only believe 'em, because *Faith* bids 'em do so, but also by the Contemplation of these Mysterys they are yet more confirm'd in that Faith, by vertue of which they did at first believe 'em *. But I do not think fit to insist upon this Article here because Proofs of this nature being not receiv'd till the Faith has been embrac'd, can be of no force to make *Infidels* embrace it; and it is absurd to confound the Reward of having submitted our Understanding, with the Motives that engage us to make this Submission. But notwithstanding the Reasons I have hitherto urg'd for establishing the Truth of *Christianity*, some perhaps may still be fearful to embrace it; some may still rely upon those vain and frivolous Cavils, which tend to prove its *Faith* to be full of Contradictions; and others there may be, who being a little more cunning and reserv'd, do indeed confess the *Christian* Religion to be very probable, inasmuch as not one of its Articles can be prov'd to be false: but yet they do not resolve to embrace it, because not every thing that *seems* to be true is really true, as neither is every thing really false which cannot directly be shewn to be false. But against this

* Nec fatiatur illis Diebus Dulcedine mirabili, considerare Altitudinem Consilii tui super Salutem Generis Humani. D. Aug. Confes. L. 9. C. 6.

kind of Reasoners, these undetermin'd Scepticks, I'll oppose the Force of this last Argument, which shall serve as a Conclusion and a Seal to this Treatise. Whatever we sufficiently know, as *reveal'd* by God, must needs be most true, and ought to be believ'd as a matter indisputable: It cannot be suppos'd that in this there is any thing indecent or unreasonable, whatever the Minds of some Men, who are so subject to be deceiv'd, and yet so ready to decide; so very weak in their Apprehension, and yet so bold in defending their Opinions, either do or can object. Now the *Christian* Religion contains in it such Characters as do sufficiently prove it to have been *reveal'd* by God: and if so, it follows by a necessary Consequence, that the things which it teaches are all of 'em adorable, all of 'em true, and ought to be receiv'd as such, according to the Rules of the justest Reasoning.

The first Proposition is grounded on the Existence of a most *perfect* God, who is the first Truth, on which all the others depend; as also he is the first Being, from which all the others are deriv'd: And this Proposition it is which shews that the *Christian* Faith, as it is supported by Divine Authority, is the most solid and most certain Notice of which our Mind is capable; that the more obscure the Truths of *Faith* are, and the greater the Difficultys which we have to combat in believing

lieving 'em, so much the more praise-worthy is it to believe 'em. The second Proposition will be clearly prov'd in the following Chapter, after which it will be easy to draw the Conclusion.

CH A P. VIII.

Christianity has such evident Proofs of its being reveal'd by God, that unless a Man be void of all Prudence, and a downright Enemy of Truth, he cannot but embrace it.

IN order to demonstrate this Truth, let us, as we promis'd, make use of those very Reasons which the Enemys of *Christianity* oppose against us; and see how the Mysterys of *Jesus Christ*, at once both God and Man, are so far from rendering the *Christian Religion* incredible, that they plainly shew it to have been reveal'd by God.

It cannot be question'd, that there has been a Man in the World who went by the Name of *Jesus Christ*, who was condemn'd to Death, and crucify'd for having declar'd himself to be God and the Son of God. Now if it be granted that this *Man* was God and the Son of God, as indeed he was, then there
needs

needs no other Proof of the Truth of Christianity; but if it be said, that he endeavour'd to pass for what he was not, then was he undoubtedly the proudest and indiscreetest Person in the World, for opposing at once the Divine Honours of the true God, of the Jews, and all the false Gods of the Heathens, and for ascribing Divinity to himself in such a poor, such a wretched Condition as he was in. What a monstrous Extravagance and Rashness was it for him to undertake, without any Assistance, the Ruin of Paganism; to aim at destroying a Religion which was so firmly rooted, maugre all the Powers of Heaven, Earth and Hell? How unconceivable is it, that he should pretend to compass his Design, by obliging Mankind to believe that God is *one in three Persons*; that there is but *one Deity, one Substance in three distinct Subsistences*; that the second of these three Persons is at once both God and Man; and that this *God-man* led an abject Life, and dy'd a shameful Death.

But the most consummate Folly of this new *Master* was his teaching, that whosoever would follow him must prefer Poverty, Ignominy, Sufferings and Death, before all that seems most agreeable to Nature; that he must even hate himself, crucify his own Flesh thro the Rigors of Mortification and the Severitys of Penitence; that his Disciples must adore his Godhead under the appearances of

a little *Bread* and *Wine*; that by this method, and as he is under this Form, they must spiritually eat his *Body* and drink his *Blood*: In short, that all these Articles ought to be so stedfastly believ'd and confess'd, that a Man should rather choose a thousand times to die than make the least question about 'em! All these are such terrible surprising Doctrines, that one would think they should rather frighten than allure Mankind; so repugnant are they to the Condition and the Conduct of one that was any thing less than *God*, that if we look on 'em, even with reference to *God*, they surpass the utmost Human Reason, and seem far beyond all the Boundaries of Truth. How can we conceive such an Instance of Madness, that a Man should pretend without any help of the Divine Power to establish these Maxims in the World; and not only to convince his *Disciples* of so incredible a Doctrine, but also to oblige 'em to convince others of it, and that even at the expence of their own Lives, after having seen their *Master* crucify'd? Was any thing ever so ridiculous, that one single Man should propose to put such a Cheat upon all the World, and that by a Method which was seemingly so gross, so extravagant, and so disproportionate to the End it drove at? Yet notwithstanding we see that this Extravagance or *Foolishness*, or whatever you'll call it, has been maintain'd and

and upheld in such a manner, that the utmost Wisdom of Men could never confound or convict it of any the least Falshood. This pretended *Foolishness* it is that has destroy'd the Dominion of Devils, has overturn'd Idols, whose Worship was so ancient and so deeply rooted in the World; this it is, that after having abolish'd *profane* Superstitions and the impious Laws of *Paganism*, establisth'd the Knowledg and Worship of the *true* God, of whom all the Nations of the Earth were ignorant, excepting only the *Jews*: In a word, this it is that reform'd the Customs and Manners of the World, that introduc'd Humanity, Sweetness, Humility among the most savage and barbarous Nations. Now can it be imagin'd, that the Founder of such a Religion was a Madman or a *Fool*; or that they who hearken'd to him were out of their senses, as they must very certainly have been, had not the one been *God* and the others inspir'd by *God*? Is it any way probable, that the *proudest* of Men should ever become a Teacher of Humility, a Vertue that was hardly nam'd in the World before his Appearance in it?

Do but compare the prodigious Effects wrought by this Man whether a *Fool* or *God*, with whatever has been done in point of Religion and Morality by the most acute *Philosophers* of Antiquity, I mean the *Socrates's*, the *Plato's*, the *Aristotle's*, the *Zeno's*, and the

the *Seneca's*, who with all their Speculations and Reasonings could not make God known to one only City, and engag'd hardly any of their Followers to embrace Vertue sincerely and in earnest. As neither could *Plotinus* with all the Favour and Help of the Emperor *Gallienus* and the Empress his Wife, found the City of *Platonopolis*, of which he had form'd a Plan in his Imagination, and wherein he propos'd to have the Laws and Republick of *Plato* exactly observ'd. All these great *Genius's*, who have had the Name of *Wise* and *Divine*, left the World in Vice, in the same Confusion and Darkness wherein they found it *. Whence it is easy to make an Estimate, which of the two has most Virtue and Force, whether the Subtlety of *Philosophy*, or the Simplicity of the *Gospel*; whether the Doctrine of the wise Men of the World, or the Grace of *Jesus Christ*?

But besides that *Jesus Christ* must have been a Madman to think to make People believe him to be God, had he not been really so; he would moreover have blacken'd his Character, if I dare to speak so, with the Marks of Blasphemy and Sacrilege: so that the taking away of his Life would have been

* For after that in the Wisdom of God, the World by Wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the Foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. Because the Foolishness of God is wiser than Men. 1 Cor. 1. 21, 25.

to rid the World of a Monster ; and a greater, a more acceptable Sacrifice could not have been made to God, than by thus revenging the Impiety of that *Man*, who presum'd to infringe upon the Rights of the *Divinity*. But if so, how then has it come to pass that the Nation which put him to Death was immediately after that afflicted with the greatest of Calamitys, as Pursuivant of what they had done ? That they have been banish'd and driven from that Country, of which they had possession for so many Years before ? That they have been depriv'd of *Kingdom* and *Priesthood*, of *Sacrifices* and *Prophecys*, all which they us'd to have in former times ? How came it that upon this Fact, as *Jesus* had foretold, their most famous *Temple* was totally destroy'd ? That this ancient People, once the great Favourites and Darlings of Heaven, have been hereupon reduc'd to an hard ignoble Servitude, and dispers'd over all the Earth, without ever finding a settl'd Habitation, a fit place to re-assemble and unite themselves again ? How is it that their Posterity are to this very day Slaves and Vagabonds, that they are the common Objects of other Mens Abhorrence ; and which is more than all, that they are forsaken by God, having not the ancient Law, at least not such as it was in its Purity among the *Hebrews*, but only a mere Shadow of it ; that is, the *Law* as it is

corrupted by the Whimsys of the *Rabbins*, by the Fables and Impietys of their *Talmud*? To which I add, that this Punishment is far different from those other Chastisements which their former Crimes ever brought upon them. The several *Captivities* these faithless People underwent lasted not very long, the longest of 'em were those of *Babylon* and *Greece*, the former of which lasted seventy Years, the latter an hundred sixty two; but *this* has continu'd without intermission for almost seventeen hundred Years. To which purpose it is also observable, that if *Christians* are punish'd by God for their Sins in one part of the Earth, they are not so in another: whereas the *Jews* are punish'd every where, in every Province and Country where they are dispers'd, and that in such a manner as never has been known among all those other Nations which have yet felt the Scourge of the Divine Justice. Let it also be consider'd, that when this terrible Curse fell upon them they were not given to Idolatry, neither had been so for many Years past; nor had they committed any of those other enormous Sins, for which, as the *Scriptures* testify, they were put in subjection and bondage to their Enemys.

But if this does not suffice to convince our Understandings, let us also weigh the Predictions that have been made by so many Persons inspir'd of God, and that so many
Ages

Ages before *Jesus Christ*, made I say in different Places and Times, relating to particular Events, and to whatever has been fulfill'd in the Person of *Christ*, and in the Publication of the *Gospel*. Who could discover and foretel things so remote, so hidden, so improbable, nay seemingly so impossible; but he to whom all is open and present, to whom there is neither Mystery nor Futurity? But the Predictions concerning *Jesus Christ* have not been all reduc'd to Words, inasmuch as he has been also in effect declar'd even without Words. For in short, let us but just cast an Eye upon the Ceremonys and Practices of the Religion of the *Hebrews*, upon the remarkable Events and Actions set down in the *Old Testament*, and we shall straightway find that these are so many Figures and Prophecys of what he has actually done. The Life of *Christ Jesus* bears an exact relation and conformity to the Actions of the *Patriarchs*, to the Promises of the *Prophets*, and the Ordinances of the *Law*.

If these Testimonys are not thought sufficiently authentick, there is also another which God himself gave to the Divinity of *Jesus*, and which we ought to look on as the Foundation of *Christianity*. The great God has spoken, and by the Words that have gone out of his Mouth, has at once made known himself and *Jesus Christ*, as he is the Sovereign Lord and absolute Master of Na-

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ture, as an Establisher of those Orders here below, which no natural Agent can hinder from being executed; and as one who has reserv'd to himself the Privilege of doing some things which exceed the Power of material, and even of all other immaterial Causes. But what shall we say again, if in order to confirm the Divinity of *Christ Jesus*, these Orders are revers'd, if he effects such Works as can proceed from none but an Almighty Hand, if Persons born blind recover their Sight, those at the point of Death receive perfect Health, and Members that have been a long time cut off and rotten be rejoin'd again to the Bodys they belong'd to; if we find Souls once departed return to stinking Carcases, at a bare Word, at several times, and that so openly and plainly that it can admit of none the least Doubt? What shall we say to so solid, so clear a Demonstration as this?

Did ever any Prince allow the Use of his *Seal* to confirm or authorise a Falshood against his own Person, or that Orders should be given in his Presence for making his Subjects revolt? Yet this would have been the very case, had any other but the Author of *Nature* dispens'd with the Laws of *Nature*; had God even permitted a *Man*, not being at once *God*, to do such things as were plainly God-like and Divine, merely to countenance a Lie so opposite to the Deity, which is *Truth* it self.

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But moreover, with relation to the Works of *Christ Jesus*, there was not only a bare Permission and Condescension, but also the formal and positive Action of God, he having done that which transcends the Power of *Natural Agents*; whereas it is impossible that any other Being should do that which God alone can be suppos'd to do. Is it then conceivable that this God, who by producing Substances according to the ordinary Laws of *Nature*, demonstrates the Truth of his Existence, the Majesty of his Being, the Extent of his Power, is not the very same with him, who by thwarting these *Laws*, and reproducing Substances which had been destroy'd, bears witness as it were to his other Attributes, which Human Understanding cannot apprehend but by a supernatural *Revelation*? Can it be doubted but that this extraordinary Testimony which God gives us of himself is most real and sincere? Can we imagine that God by such Operations as are proper to none but himself, went about to establish Error, Falshood and Imposture?

Wherefore the Miracles, that is, the Effects done by *Christ* against the known Course and settl'd Laws of Nature, appealing to the Senses; these Miracles, I say, must needs be look'd on as the Works of God, who knew that this was the only sure Method of settling *Christianity* in the World, who knew it to be repugnant to the Nature

of so pure a Doctrine as that taught, to be propagated either by Force of Arms, as the *Mahometan* was, or by Disorder of Manners as the *Pagan*, or by Subtlety of Reasoning, or the Artifice of Eloquence *, as the Sects of the *Philosophers* and *Sophists*; or by the Multiplication of Children and the Increase of Familys, as *Judaism* was. Hence it also was that at the Birth of the Church, when *Christianity* was built upon the Ruins of *Idolatry*, and of those other Sects which had corrupted the World, the Gift of Miracles was freely bestow'd on the Followers of *Christ*, God working with 'em and confirming the Word with Signs following, as it was absolutely needful in those early times. But when the *Faith* was so far establish'd, as that it must be the Fault of Mens Wills not readily to embrace it, then God who does nothing in vain, thought fit to withdraw his wonder-working Hand, and to let things go in the ordinary course of *Nature*, whereby his wise Conduct in some sense resembles that of Men, who have not so much Care, and take not so much Pains about a Tree when it is deeply rooted and widely spreads it self, as when it is newly planted and begins to grow.

But perhaps it may be bluntly deny'd that such miraculous Works were ever done by

* Not by enticing Words of Man's Wisdom, 1 Cor. 2. 4.

Jesus Christ, or by any who propagated and preserv'd his Doctrine. Those who dare say this, I refer to the ancient Historys and Records which relate them, let 'em examin the Circumstances of them, let 'em consider the Number and Quality of the Persons that confirm them. Among so many Witnesses, how many of 'em are there who are either Enemies to *Christianity*, and on that account cannot be suspected; or else indifferent, or at least creditable, tho they were *Christians*? For had they lied as to Matters which happen'd in their time, and were transacted in the View of whole Nations, nothing would have been easier than to have arraign'd and confounded 'em; yet do we not find that the least Falshood, as to the Facts they relate, was ever objected, or at least ever prov'd upon 'em: nay, whoever will make a Detail of all this, will find in each particular a greater Certainty than is in some Truths, which no Man ever durst be so rash as to question; as namely, that there was such a Republick as that of *Carthage*, that *Constantine* was a great Emperor, and *Godfry de Bouillon* a great Commander.

Perhaps the *Libertine* may still reply, that all Religions boast of Miracles, whether the *Pagan*-or *Mahometan*, or especially the *Jewish*. To take off which Exception, I say, that as to the *Jewish* Religion, it may indeed very justly do so, this being at the bottom

the *Christian* Religion. And thus do its Miracles so much the more confirm the Doctrine of *Christ*, as it may be observ'd that from the time that the greatest part of *Judaism* has been separated from *Christianity*, that is, for seventeen Centurys, it has not been able to shew even one of those marvellous Works with which it before abounded. Touching the other Religions, whereas they all of 'em pretend to *Miracles*, they do thereby give us to understand the invincible Force of this *Testimony*, which being as it were an Abridgment of all other Proofs, is sufficient to convince all ingenuous Minds, whether they be learned or unlearned. But withal their manner of producing this Testimony in favour of themselves plainly shews, that all the *Miracles* of which they boast are but mere Impostures. To make good which Charge, let us first begin with the *Gentiles*.

They relate very wonderful Events drawn from ancient *Historys*, and written in fabulous times, when all the *Hero's* pretended to derive their Extraction from some *Deity*; when they made the People believe that *Romulus* was rais'd up to Heaven, and that *Numa* had private Conferences with the Goddess *Ageria*, &c. Not to proceed to a particular Survey of all these fabulous Accounts, lest I should lose my way in traversing so dark, so large a Field: In short, I say, if *Paganism* had any Miracles, why did it not oppose

oppose 'em to those of *Christianity*, at the time that it made so fierce a War against it? How has it come to pass that the strongest has yielded to the weakest? That the once victorious has been vanquish'd? That the *Gentiles* have embrac'd the *Christian* Religion, which had no more publick Proof, none more expos'd to the Railery and Scorn of its Enemys, than the Miracles it produc'd for their Conversion? Had the Miracles of the *Heathens* been real, had they proceeded from God who alone is capable of working true ones; how came he then to permit that any such should be done in favour of the *Christians*, nay that the Miracles of the *Gospel* should so mightily outdo all others for their Number, their Quality, their Evidence and Efficacy, just as the Prodigys of *Moses* far exceeded the Inchantments of *Pharaoh's* Magicians?

Wherefore either *Paganism* has never had any Miracles at all, or at least those it pretends to, have been the Works of the *Devil*, unworthy to be compar'd with those of God, who was manifest in the Flesh to destroy them. And it must be own'd that only the Miracles of the *Christian* Religion have proceeded from the Omnipotent Hand of God, inasmuch as they have been able to dissipate all the others, just as the *Sun* with his glittering Beams dispels the Mists and Clouds.

But what shall we say to *Mahometism*? What can be alledg'd more weak and ridiculous than those Prodigys which had no other Shelter, no other Method of giving 'em Credit, but only the Help of numerous Armys? Could *Mahomet* ever boast that he rais'd the Dead, or heal'd the Sick, as he owns that *Jesus Christ* and his Disciples have often done? Does not this impious Lawgiver plainly discover the Foundation of his Law, in that he permits all those to be destroy'd who refuse Obedience to it?

Thus we see that the principal *Religions* of the World, and the most inveterate against *Christianity* do confess either in Words or by their Conduct, that the Miracles of *Christianity* do far exceed theirs. Thus do we find in a matter that is indivisible, and which admits of no Degrees, that the Enemies of *Truth* are forc'd to own it, because in that they own the *greater* to be true on the side of *Christianity*, they plainly allow that the *lesser* is false on their own side.

But if our Adversarys be still so obstinate as that they will not yield, and so mad as to put out their Eyes lest they should see; yet can they not by their utmost Endeavours and Subtletys escape the Force of this *Dilemma*: either the Miracles which we alledg as Proofs of the *Christian* Faith have been really done at the Birth of the Church, or they have not; if they have been really done, then
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do the Reasonings by which we have establish'd the *Christian* Revelation stand impregnable and unshaken; if they have not been really done, then is here one Miracle greater than all the rest that are suppos'd, namely, that the World has been converted without any Miracles. No Religion has ever believ'd so obscure Truths, has hop'd for so lofty Goods, has wrought so difficult Effects as the *Christian* Religion has done: How then could Mankind be brought over to embrace it, but by manifest Prodigys, or by a Miracle exceeding all Prodigys *? Hitherto I have touch'd at this Article with a special reference to the Wisdom of God; I shall now proceed to examin it with respect to his Sovereign Power, whose Property alone it is to work a *Miracle*.

Jesus Christ was crucify'd when he had brought over to his Service only a few poor, ignorant, timorous Disciples, who let him die without making the least Opposition to his Enemys. Now it is plain that these Disciples, who undertook the Publication of the *Gospel* after the shameful Death of their *Master*, must needs in this Enterprize have met

* *Esset autem omnibus Signis mirabilius, si ad credendum tam ardua, ad operandum tam difficilia, & ad sperandum tam alta, Mundus absque mirabilibus Signis inductus fuisset a simplicibus & ignobilibus Hominibus. Thom. Aqu. cont. Gent. L. 1. C. 6.*

with more Difficultys than ever *he* did ; who as he was the *Head* of the Undertaking, must be suppos'd to have had more Authority, more Wisdom, more Ingenuity, and more Expedients for making it succeed. To this I add, that the Talents of these *Disciples* were very near the same ; “ and so in the ordinary way there could, one would think, “ be no such thing as Government among “ ’em ; that till then there had been Contests and Jealousys between ’em, about “ the *chiefest Place* ; yet still no single one of “ ’em was vested with a right of governing, “ or could pretend to a Sovereignty over the “ rest, especially considering that they had “ no expresse Authority for it, and that they “ had been given to understand the contrary, “ by that even Conduct which their common *Master* observ’d always towards ’em, “ to the end he might fix in ’em a Principle of “ Humility. And supposing there had been one *Head* set over the rest, yet moreover the Countrys where they were to travel being very remote from each other, it was *morally* impossible for ’em to have any Communication, or at least for the Superior to make himself obey’d by his Subjects.

What a wonder then is it to see the World reduc’d under Obedience to *Christ Jesus*, not by *Christ Jesus* himself, but by the Ministry of his Disciples, and in particular of the twelve *Apostles* ! How surprizing is it to behold a Govern-

Government so well concerted, so very uniform, yet not founded on a Subordination of one to another, but on a bare Union of *Hearts*, which in other Cases is observ'd to hold but a very little while, and is very easily broken? What a Miracle is it that an orderly Submission of Wills should bring about the ends of an absolute Dominion; and that Links, which were seemingly so weak, should be indissoluble! But this is the least of what I have yet further to add to this purpose.

It cannot be deny'd, that at the Birth of the Church, the *Roman Empire* mightily flourish'd, that it had not only puissant Armies and immense Riches, but also illustrious Personages, excellent *Philosophers*, and admirable Wits. It is on all hands agreed, that the principal Nations of which this vast *Monarchy* consisted, were the wisest and politest in the whole World, and that that Age was particularly free from the Barbarism and Incivility of other times. Now at such a Conjunction as this it was propos'd to make this Empire subject to *Jesus Christ* crucify'd; but how could this prodigious Revolution be effected by the Disciples who follow'd him, and who after having been the Companions of his Life were Witnesses also of his Death? Yet these were the Men, who, maugre the infamous Punishment their *Master* suffer'd, would have him notwithstanding reign over *Emperors*, and establish his Law throughout the

the Earth. In order to compass which end, what one would think could they do, but fortify and strengthen their Party by making Alliances and Leagues with the most Warlike *Nations*; what could they better do than raise Troops, choose Commanders, and so with Sword in Hand encounter the most formidable *Powers*? But in effect so far do we find they were from this, that a small number of very weak Men attack'd the whole World, having no other Forces but those of the *Word* only.

What then shall we say? It may be they were subtle *Philosophers*, or eloquent *Orators*; either they had such plain Demonstrations as could not but reduce the most obstinate Minds, or else they utter'd such polite, such artful Discourses, as could not but charm, and so perswade the People. But so far again were they from this, that they were but simple rustical *Fishermen*, utterly void of Learning and Eloquence.

What then? Did they not propose things so very plain and easy, that they to whom they propos'd 'em could not choose but assent to 'em so soon as they heard 'em utter'd? But so far was it also from this, that tho indeed they preach'd up a Religion which was conformable to good Sense and to the Light of *Nature*, yet was it in a great measure such as was hard to be conceiv'd, rais'd above Human Understanding, and full of incomprehensible *Mysterys*.

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What then could they do in this Case? Surely these Preachers, while they taught so strange a Doctrine, had the Cunning to point out to Mankind an easy and pleasant way to Happiness; surely they made use of sweet and fawning Words, in order to gain the *Wills* of those whose *Minds* they were not able to convince; And in a word, to change Idolaters into Believers, surely they permitted all manner of Licentiousness, all carking after Profit and Fruition of Pleasure. But on the contrary we find, that they oblig'd Men to live in the severest, the hardest way that was ever yet practis'd; they talk'd almost of nothing else but Poverty, Chastity, Temperance, Fasting, Mortification and Repentance, of nothing but renouncing ones natural Inclinations, and of submitting ones own *Will* to the Will of another. But it may be you'll say, that a little Honour sweeten'd all that was bitter in so sad a Condition, and that the Hope of *Glory* brought over *Christians* to embrace the Cross, as it engag'd the *Philosophers* to despise Pleasures. But quite the contrary, they preach'd up the Contempt of Honours and of ones very self; they maintain'd that the most rigorous Penitence, the most heroick Actions are of no value in the sight of God, if there be in 'em the least Ostentation or Vanity.

What then again, you'll say, could they do, but at least give out that a peaceful Life
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and a quiet Death are the certain Reward of all these Troubles? But on the contrary, they establish'd a *Religion*, the bare Profession of which was esteem'd a Crime, and was pursu'd with the cruellest Torments which the utmost Barbarity could inflict or invent. The new Converts to *Christianity* had nothing in their View, but only Executioners, Prisons, Gibbets, and all the most frightful Images of *Death*; they were persecuted as Profligates and sacrilegious Villains, during the three first Ages of the Church, that is, till *Christianity* had taken deep root, and was firmly establish'd in the World. And in what manner were they persecuted? How *ingenious* was Cruelty to torment 'em? What various kinds of Death, what unheard of Punishments were invented for 'em? How many Millions of *Martyrs* were there of every Age and Sex, of every Condition and Country? What Vigor, what Patience, what Joy were express'd by these Believers in *Flames* and on *Wheels*? I do but just touch at all this, because I am unable to express it fully and exactly.

But perhaps you'll say, that these Calamities happen'd to none but those who were brought over to embrace the *Faith*, while they who first preach'd it were themselves exempted from 'em; it may be the *Apostles*, when publishing their novel Opinions, might indeed exhort the People to *Martyrdom*, yet
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would they never expose themselves to it. But as to this I answer, that they observ'd a quite opposite Conduct; these first Preachers having spent their Lives in Labours and Troubles, did all of 'em suffer at last the cruellest Deaths, excepting only one, whom the Divine Providence miraculously preserv'd for the good of the Church.

Thus you see the Methods by which the Kingdom of *Jesus Christ* was founded, yet which were seemingly as disproportionate to the End they drove at, as Fire is to cool, Ice to heat, or Light to darken. However *Christianity* was every where planted, and that in a very little time. What mighty Numbers of *Philosophers* and *Orators* embrac'd the Doctrine of the Gospel! The Learned as well as the Unlearned, the Rich and the Poor, the Noble and the Ignoble renounc'd Idolatry, and confess'd the Divinity of *Christ*. The *Roman* Empire quickly submitted to the Cross, and ador'd the Person crucify'd; and several *Kings*, even of the most barbarous Nations, were soon reduc'd to the Obedience of Faith. In short, maugre all the Efforts of Tyrants, the Rage of Devils, the Diversity of Climates, and Contrariety of Humours, *Christianity* was so firmly establish'd, and so widely extended, that on a sudden it became the prevailing Religion. Now who but the Author of Nature could effect this *Miracle*, by suspending the
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the Laws of Nature? Who but God alone could give Success to such an Enterprize, when carry'd on by so unlikely, so contrary Methods?

Does the *Libertine* here tell me, that the *Mahometan* Religion and some other Sects have had great Success in the World? As to this, in short I answer him, that the manifest Differences between *Christianity* and *Mahometism* do sufficiently prove the Truth of the one, and the Falshood of the other. Who does not know that Violence and Intrigues, Pleasures and Profits, are the Principles and Grounds of the *Mahometan* Religion, as also they are of many other Sects which have corrupted a part of *Christendom*? History and Observation do set this matter beyond dispute.

Did not the Law of *Mahomet* begin its Growth in a stupid barbarous Country? To avoid Impediments in its way, did it not in some measure adapt it self to the Doctrines and Ceremonys of the other *Religions* which preceded it? It borrow'd the Rite of *Circumcision* from the *Jews*, and did a great Honour to *Jesus Christ* by the Esteem it express'd for *Christianity*, assigning no Reasons why it separated from it; it taught not such things as were sublime and above the Capacity of Human Understanding; it subdu'd the People, not by Gentleness but Force; the impious Author of it was an Usurper and a Tyrant, and made way for his Doctrine with Sword
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in hand ; instead of Reason and Proof he only made use of Injustice and Violence, in order to extend and establish his Conquests : every Man, said he, must be either my Disciple or my Slave, must either follow my *Doctrine* or pay excessive Tributes, must either believe me upon my bare Word, or renounce all the Pleasures of Life. Now what could such worldly-minded, such sensual Men as he met with, do in this Case? How could they, who were bended to the *Earth*, and wholly immers'd in Voluptuousness ; how could they, I say, examin the things propos'd to 'em nicely and exactly? Besides, what Judgment can the *Mind* form, what Choice can the *Will* make, when Fear prevails and governs? Can Threats and Crueltys produce a rational Belief?

On t'other hand, *Mahomet* has soften'd the Contradictions and Absurditys of his Law, by I know not what Appearance of publick Good, and by whatever may flatter the Senses : so that no wonder if plain and ignorant Men could not presently discover and confute 'em ; and as for those who were likely to do it, this false *Prophet* put himself in a condition to oppress all such, before they could have time to deliberate what was right, what wrong, what true, what false, and what side was safest to be taken. Could *Mahometism* ever stand the Test of a rational Examination? has it been ever enquir'd into by sober

Judgments? and has it not been at once condemn'd? What Trials or Persecutions has it ever stood the brunt of? What has it to boast of like the *Christian Church*, which has multiply'd her self by the Death of her Children; and as weak as she once was, has triumph'd over the *Power* of her greatest Enemies?

A certain * *Emperor* once fancy'd he had destroy'd her, and would needs himself make an Epitaph upon her, engraving it on Marbles; That he had purg'd the Earth from *Christian People*, nay that he had abolish'd the very Name of *Christian* throughout his Empire. But the Falshood of these proud Inscriptions very quickly appear'd, and in a little time this same *Religion*, which was thought to be extinguish'd, became the Mistress of *Rome* and of the World. Thus we see what Proofs there are for confirming *Christians* in their Faith, and for obliging *Infidels* to quit their Errors. The Sum of what I have said is this; The main Demonstrations of the *Christian Religion* consist in the Conformity of its Maxims and Precepts to the Light of Nature, in the Agreement there is between the Grandeur of its *Mysterys* and that of God; in the Assistances it gives, and the Rewards it

* *Dioclesian*—Superstitione Christ.—Ubique deleta, &c.
 —Nomine Christianorum deleta, &c. Gruter. Inscript.
 P. 280. Num. 3, 4.

proposes to Vertue; in the Remedys it appllys; and the Chastisements it threatens to Vice; in that Purity of Life, and that eminent Perfection to which it leads those who exactly observe the Rules of its *Morality*. Add to this the Origin of *Christianity*, it being as ancient as the Creation of the World; the Ruin of Idolatry; Reformation of Manners universally introduc'd, together with the Knowledge of one only Creator of the World; the Conversion of so many different sorts of People, nay of the most knowing sharp-sighted Persons, who at first made a Mock at *Christianity*, and traduc'd it as an Instance of the greatest *Foolishness*; yet, who after having made some Enquiry into it, were at length conquer'd by the Force of its Truth, and came over many of 'em at the Hour of Death to the *Christian* Faith, when it is not to be suppos'd that the Passions could occasion false Judgments.

Moreover, there are some special Tokens which distinguish the *Christian* Religion from those invented by Men, and which evidently shew the Excellency of the one and the Absurdity of the other. As for example, the Authority of the Divine Testimony in those Predictions which have been accomplish'd, in those many Miracles which have been wrought by *Jesus Christ* and other holy Men, in the Conversion of the World which was effected in a wonderful manner, in the uni-

form Doctrine and unshaken Stability of the Church, which has seen the Rise and Fall of a Multitude of Sects, but remains it self unchang'd and impregnable: In short, in the Advantage *Christianity* has over all the Societys of the Philosophers, and over all the other Religions, in that it resists the Motions of self Love, soars up and advances above all Human Imagination, all natural Reason and Eloquence; in that it is independent on the Power of Angels and Devils, it being impossible that *these* should establish a Religion which is oposite to themselves; and no less impossible that *those* should do it, unless they fram'd an extravagant Lie, and ascrib'd a Religion to God, of which they themselves were the Authors and Inventors.

If we seriously and minutely consider all this, how can we but confess that *Christianity* has Reasons abundantly sufficient for engaging any Person of Sense to embrace it? And must it not be own'd, that rational sober Heads, which are willing to examin things prudently and nicely, can never be mistaken in such kind of Searches, unless God Almighty by a secret Method of his *Justice* refuses 'em that Light which he ordinarily affords us, that he may guide us to the Knowledge of the *Truth*?

But to silence the most obstinate, the most perverse Dispositions of Men, I say, that supposing it possible for us to err in other matters,

ters, by going in the way of *moral*, I mean, of perfect Evidence; yet does it not thence follow, that we can likewise err in choosing a *Religion* according to this Principle. Because in short, while we regulate our selves in the Choice of a Religion by *moral* Evidence, after we have prudently and thoroughly weigh'd the Advantages, which this Evidence has beyond all other opposite Perswasions, we may be satisfy'd that we have done just that which God requires. Thus do we follow the Order of his Providence, which has appointed or at least permitted these things; all which being put together do make up that Advantage which a *moral* Demonstration has above any contrary Opinion. Now this cannot be, unless God be pleas'd that it should be so; and Man cannot fail of taking that side which God would have him take, unless he dispense with those Laws which *Reason* gives him, and act against his proper Light. Wherefore he is plainly oblig'd to determine himself to a *Religion*, that so he may serve his *Creator*, may obtain his ultimate Happiness, and avoid Eternal Misery. Now seeing it behoves the Divine Providence to give Men the Knowledg of the true Religion, in order to conduct 'em to this *End*; and this Providence does not in effect make known any other, but that which carrys with it the highest Degree of *moral* Demonstration: it must needs be concluded, either that the Religion

ligion which has this kind of Evidence and Certainty, is true; or else that God permits, nay even ordains that Man should err and be deceiv'd, while he observes the Rules of the highest Prudence in choosing a *Religion*. It is needless to explain how ridiculous this latter Consequence is, and to mention how many Absurdities follow from it. Wherefore it must be own'd, that the Religion which has the Evidence aforesaid is certainly true: were it not so, it would then follow, that a wise Deliberation is the ready way to fall into a Precipice; that as a Man would wish to secure himself from Error and Destruction, his only method for it would be to discard all the Maxims of *Reason*; that nothing can prove more fatal to him than to steer his Life by the Rules of Vertue, Piety and Prudence: And in a word, that for a Man to do what he ought, is the worst he can do.

Then would it also follow, that we are misled into Error, Illusion, and an Abyss of all manner of Evils, by those very Methods which should in all likelihood lead us from them; that is, by embracing the only means which the Wisdom of God has appointed or permitted for our *Happiness* and Salvation; by executing what we are indispensably oblig'd to execute, and what after having us'd all possible diligence to inform our selves about it, we cannot but conceive to be well-pleasing to God; by submitting our *Mind* to his Sovereign

reign Authority, and captivating our *Will* under his good Providence.

It is plain from these solid and rational Principles, that *moral* Evidence, tho by it self it may not be infallible as to other matters, yet has in this case the utmost Infallibility; it being here join'd with the Divine *Providence* which cannot deceive us, and which is engag'd not only to make known the true Religion, but also not to suffer, that he who submits to its Guidance, and throws himself with Confidence into its Arms, should fall into Error and Mistake.

Upon this ground then let us either assuredly confess that *Christianity* ought to be embrac'd as the only true Religion; or else own it to be most false, that there is any such thing as a true Religion, that there is a Providence in God, or a God in the World: These three Particulars being connected by an indissoluble Chain, and inseparable from each other.

In short, let us own and conclude that either it is an enormous Sin not to believe the *Truth of the Christian Religion*; or that we are allow'd to believe that the Sovereign *Good* has done to us the greatest Evil; that the first *Truth* has lied, and that God has deceiv'd us!

Thus far my Reasoning has aim'd at *Infidels* and Unbelievers. Now as for *us* who are already *Christians*, and who have had the Knowledge of these Divine Truths, almost
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as soon as our Eyes were open; what a sense of Gratitude ought *we*, I say, to have for so great, so eminent a Favour! a Favour which God has refus'd to very many and very wise Men, who made Profession of steering their Lives by the Rules of *Moral Honesty*! How can so sweet a Reflection upon the Divine Goodness choose but melt us into Tears for our past Ingratitude, and move our Gratitude to God for the future? Wherefore let us confess this Faith, which gives us a Distinction from *Jews, Idolaters and Turks*, to be the most precious Treasure that could descend to us from Heaven; let us embrace it with all our Heart, and particularly let us be careful to make it the Rule of our Life, and of our whole Behaviour. For if it be an extreme Obstinacy to shut our Eyes against the *Truth of Christianity*, it is a much greater and a more inexcusable Folly to believe its Doctrine to be true, and yet, after we have receiv'd it, to live in such a manner as if we still suspected to be false.



T H E E N D.